POET-SEER
SWAMI RAMA TIRTHA

(The Poetry of Spiritual Vision)

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NEW DELHI-110012

228915

AROMA PUBLISHING HOUSE,
EG-132, Inderpuri, New Delhi-12

I am thankful to the Jammu and Kashmir Cultural Academy and Language, Jammu acknowledge the subsidy given for the publication of this book. The Academy is in no way responsible for the statement, opinion, errors, shortcomings and the like that may occur in the publication.

922.9454
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1ST PUBLISHED : 1987

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Price : Rs. 130.00

PRINTED IN INDIA

Distributors
ARIANA PUBLISHING HOUSE
EG-132, Inderpuri, New Delhi-12

Printed by En Kay Enterprises, Hari Nagar, New Delhi at
Typographer, Mayapuri, New Delhi.

Rama is the worshipper of the Sun and The Day. Like Rishis of old he is the finder of the Day and the Discoverer of the Solar World. He knew what he was about, and sought to make his meaning plain to others who went to him. There is a clarity of thought and directness of perception in his expression. The feelings and ideas of his poems are, however deep, not complex to the level of obscurity. There is in them nothing of the turbid magic that draws us towards the uncertain, the unexpected and the disconcerting. Rama's world is of solid reality with a bold, precise and clear outline. When we read the poems and hear them, speak we feel that they are the utterings of self-evident truth. The lines of the poems have the largeness, the sweep, the authenticity of elemental forces and the magic and mystery of things behind the veil. The poems may seem deficient in their human appeal, however, Rama deliberately chose to be non-human in order to bring out the universal and transcendent elements in the truth and beauty of things. It had to be so, because it is based on his identification of the creative impulse with the experience of the sublime in Nature. It is different from the assumptions of the New Critics and the Schools of Normative and Formalist criticism, and goes one step above form and thought, and the distinction of subject and object to what penetrates thought, and where the

Subject—that perceives,
Object—the thing perceived

are like the waves that surge in the sea of consciousness for the sake of the drama that is based upon the rhythm of cause and effect determined by the Self itself.

By leaving aside the traditional laws of prosody, Rama gained in spontaneity, suppleness and originality. His style is fluid and flowing, flexible, and gradually becomes transparent and weighty in its import. His theory rests on the belief that technique evolves itself with the power of inspiration and the deep vision of truth. The poems are the living and concentrated embodiment of Rama consciousness. It is upon this strength and quality of the poet's consciousness that the worth and the force of his writing depends. His light and knowledge are there in the poems, always present and active. In understanding a poem, we should refrain from mental effort, and let it enter into our deeper consciousness. Then only we can establish a contact with the consciousness behind the words. The images described in the poems are not mere images, Rama saw them in his vision, they were living realities, and we should also see and feel them as such. He made poetry the mouth-piece of his soul's utterances, exalted as the "word" of God, and as Sri Aurobindo calls it, "the mantra of the Real".

I should like to express my thanks to M/s Soni Drillers, Pathankot (Punjab) for lending me the type-writer. I thank also to the Manager of the Firm, CH. A.N. Saini for his assistance in typing the manuscript and for his unforgettable hospitality. I thank Prof. S.P. Sharma for reading the typed manuscript. Further, with a deep sense of regard I offer my humble salutations to all those great personalities whose sayings and view-points I have incorporated in this Book as a touch-stone in appreciating Rama's poems.

I am much indebted to the people of Mathola – a village in Badarwah, surrounded by lofty mountains with Pine and Cedar woods. It was in this mini-Kashmir, that I felt Nature and Rama-consciousness to be inextricably woven into the integral vision that is at the base of his poetic organism. Thus have I completed the work by the grace of Rama in the lap of Nature knowing that

"I never did a personal deed,
Impersonal Lord I am indeed."

B.L. ZUTSHI

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Introduction

Since the dawn of creation, whenever and wherever virtue subsides and wickedness prevails, the Divine finds the possibility of manifesting himself as a prophet to call us back to the truth. He shows us how we have deviated and how in our actual life we have disregarded the teachings of the great seers. The advent of Swami Rama Tirtha is like the sudden appearance (after a long spell of gloom and anxiety) of Shri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Tagore, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Gandhi, Raja Rammohun Roy and host of other stalwarts. They were archangels like Emerson's Uriel who descended to give direction to the old order, and also to press out of good and evil, the wine of the knowledge of the Self. These gems of the motherland ushered in the Renaissance in India, and gave a new direction to her historical evolution. With their power and wisdom they put the old wine of the Vedic wisdom into the new scientific and psychological moulds of modern consciousness. What was lost in the darkness of ignorance, poverty, misery and slavery into which India had fallen, was again reawakened by these geniuses. Among all these, Swami Rama Tirtha, within the short span of thirty-three years displayed his unique role in this drama of transformation. He, like all other great men, was unique, and his biography like them, is not on the surface. Whatever little we can build up from his life, is not enough to unveil the real Rama. Yet this little can, however, throw enough light on the source of his poetic inspiration and the charm of his personality that passes into the words of his poems. What he was, what his realization was, will not be easily known, till evolution takes a step ahead from the present mental knowledge and reaches higher intuitive consciousness.

Before dealing with Rama as a poet, the nature and function of his poetry and the fountain-head of his warbling songs; we shall first attempt to throw a brief light on his life and character which pass into the words of his poems and breed ecstasy. For, he was not only one of the greatest philosophers and humanitarians of Modern India, but a poet-seer or a 'Kavi'. According to the Vedic conception of the poet, who pursued the path of the Right (*Ritam*) and established its validity on the basis of his experience for the progressive march of human evolution. He is the Seer of Truth, "*Kavayah satyadrastarah*", who has direct vision, luminous intelligence and immediate perception, and who due to his being master of himself, is able to maintain the Truth in its dynamic working. The words of Nolini Kanta Gupta about the poet-seer aptly apply to Rama, because "he is like a fast steed well yoked, pressing forward; he is the charger that moves straight and unswerving and carries us beyond"[1], in his soaring flights leaving far behind :

"All planets, suns and stars and skies"

because, as he sings :

"My twineless kite of Liberty, free !
With full breast sing I, songs of glee !
I am free, I am free, I am free !
The world, the world is naught to me."

There is a great penetrating force in Rama's poetry, and its rhythmic ebb and flow is shaped out of the innermost experience of life. For, (as we have said) he is a 'Kavi', and the 'Kavi' is an invariable epithet of gods. Rama was a living god,[2] wandering through the mountains and forests, fearing nothing, caring for nothing; but only drinking deep the wine of truth. Wherever he went he radiated its joy, in every word and image spontaneously. He had realised how this 'I' stretched to infinity, is transformed into the super-solar blaze, and then only :

"The world turns aside,
To make room for Me,
I come blazing light,
And shadows must flee."

Here Rama touches the heights of uniqueness with his peculiarity of expression that is charged with a volcanic force that has no match. "The most unique", writes Dr. Radhakrishnan, "is the most universal".[3] A great man, whether he is a great poet, or a thinker, a statesman, a great sage or a great patriot; differs from the common man in his courage to dream and materialise that dream into reality. Swami Rama Tirtha gave life a meaning, a purpose and dedicated himself to that purpose. Rama's lectures and poems can be placed among the great classics of the world. In them there is a 'timeless and spaceless quality', and like the Dialogues of Buddha or Plato, the dramas of Sophocles and the plays of Shakespeare have, both national and universal significance.

Rama consciousness is a force in operation. Its ringing declaration is given apt substance and matter in his poetry. Poetry and personality are not two distinct antithetical elements working apart, rather they are the co-ordinated factors that spring out of the Self of the artist. Rama was a flame of aspiration that rose out of the fathomless depths of Divine and shone like a solar light with an implicit purpose to divinise mind and life. His poetry expresses the perfection of this aspiring tendency of the soul to fly higher and higher like a 'cloud of fire' and scale the heights of the inner heaven of immense possibilities.

In order to appreciate and evaluate the concept of Rama's poetry (that he himself never had time to formulate) it will not be out of the way to estimate his character and personality (as a student, as a teacher and as a romantic) with a view to enter into the deeper recesses of the consciousness out of which the cadence of words and images of his poems flow. His life itself was a sublime poem of profound rhythm, expressing its creative energies in a most surprising and original manner. On the basis of this perspective, we may perhaps be able to judge his poetry from a wider angle and locate its aesthetic and universal import. We shall not ask questions about the details of the material existence of Rama's body. "For God's sake", said Rama in one of his lectures, "do not take me for this physical body, nor consider yourself subservient to this body".[4] These details are in themselves of not much interest, and must not attract attention, because for Rama :

"My Self, the Self is all to me,
The body, whither it goes, what care I,
If tossed here and there, or left to die.
I am Freedom's Self, let the body as salt-sea-spray,
Bedashed hither and thither or up and away !"

Throughout his life, knowingly or unknowingly, he had been what the Lord wanted him to be, and he had done what the Supreme wanted him to do. That alone matters in our pursuit of the subject.

Swami Rama Tirtha (1873-1906) was quite an "uncommon child", and it was prophesied by astrologers that he was the coming "genius of his race". He lost his mother when he was only a few days old, and had to subsist on cow's milk; the only 'diet' that he said is the "product of love". He was married at the age of ten. The extreme penury and the thorny life in which he managed to bloom up as a poet, philosopher, scholar and mathematician is a daring deed of his strong will sharpened by the knowledge of the Self. Rama was a patient architect of himself from childhood to manhood; progressing forward like Wordsworth's poet from good to better "daily self-surpassed". He was born ascetic to whom the rigour of the circumstances, suffering and obscurities of life, only chasten and subdue all that is dark and passionate in man. As a student his life was spent in the rigid and austere penances of extreme poverty. Extreme hard labour and the silent sufferings of his hungry stomach for days together did not deter his love of knowledge and a thirst for higher spiritual experience. Without deviating from the ideal, he underwent great trial and suffering, and eventually emerged triumphantly a scholar, poet, philosopher and spiritualist of the highest order. Such was his commitment to knowledge and to the advancement of learning. He was a typical student who loved to study, not with any ulterior motive, but for satisfying his ever-growing thirst for knowledge;

his "burning love" that could not be cooled down even by "the Himalayan Snows" because,

"………deeper flows for ever,
The passion of my soul."

Rama's love of studies and passion for knowledge, is touchingly painted by him in his letter (1894) to his Guru, Dhanaji :

> That I should be enabled to study well duringtvacation is my fervent prayer to the Great Lord and to you……. My one great wish is that my study should grow from more to more; I have no other desire……without some sort of study let me not while away my time……this is my constant prayer.

Like Carlyle, his was a philosophy of perpetual struggle single-mindedness and a dedication to a single purpose. He was an ideal student who did not love comfort; but as an ardent worker he led a strenuous and disciplined life; knowing that in this imperfect word—samsara—there are two fruits of inimitable quality; the study of our great classics and communion with great minds.

Rama was a very bright student possessing a "precocious mind" and an "unusual intelligence". He made himself quite a prodigy of learning within a short span of life; and it seemed as if "he was acquainted with the whole range of human thought." From Matriculation upwards, he always took a very high place in the University examinations. One instance of his extraordinary intelligence can be seen in his daring attempt to solve all the thirteen questions when the other candidates could hardly solve three or four questions in the B.A. Final Examination. About this he speaks, "Since Rama's heart was full of conviction, he solved all the thirteen questions and wrote 'Examine any nine out of these thirteen'."[5] Being exceptionally bright in Mathematics, he passed his M.A. in this subject at the age of twenty with a very high percentage of marks. He was very "obstinate" from his childhood and this obstinacy was a strange phenomenon of his character that he turned into the great power of resolution with which he pursued his studies and *yogic* *sadhana.* Once in his advanced class at the University, he took a "vow never to do anything with the aid of the professors", and he worked successfully to the end. Before he was a Professor in the Lahore Forman Christian College, where he served for about two years "he had already developed some deep convictions, a great will, a robust faith, an infinite self-reliance which he afterwards called "balanced-recklessness, and a mathematical mind."[6]

Professor Tirtha Rama was a voracious reader. He studied not only widely but also deeply so that to use the words of Bacon—"studies pass into character" and are turned into an ornament and a source of great delight. Rama lived in the company of a galaxy of saints, prophets and poets, before he came to be a poet and an apostle himself. His constant companions were notable Sufis like Hafiz, Attar, Maulana Room and Shamstabrez. Among the saints and the poets of India whom he loved, so as to lose himself in the love-ecstasy of Chaitanya, sweetness of Tuka Ram and Nanak. Tulsi Das and Sur Das were undoubtedly his inspirers. The meditations of Kabir and Farid, Hassan and Boo Ali Kalandar too exerted their shaping influence in the widening of Rama's poetic consciousness. The faith of Prahlad and Dhruva, the intense spirituality of Mira Bai, Bullashah and Gopal Singh had their share in intensifying Rama's spiritual passion. Rama had studied the four Vedas in 1906, and was a "master pandit of every mantra", whose every word he had analysed with the "acute accuracy of a philologist". He had also mastered Persian, English, Hindi, Urdu and Sanskrit literatures.

Rama's encyclopaedic vision embraced both East and West in its purview. His study and character symbolised the co-mingling of all different cultures and the birth of a new spiritual race. He loved science, and was an amateur chemist and botanist. His special study in the philosophy of science was Evolution. He had mastered Shankara, Kanad, Kapila, Gautama, Pantanjali, Jaimini, Vyasa, Krishna, side by side with Kant, Hegel, Goethe, Fichte, Spinoza, Comte, Spencer, Darwin, Haeckel, Tyndal, Huxley, Star, Jordon and Professor James. The thoughts of Emerson and Carlyle, the free chants of Whitman and Thoreau were read for the lustre and for the deeper whisperings they contain. Rama's study did not end with mere admiration. He was among the type of man who wrote the Upanishads and sang Vedic hymns. However, he was not a mere singer of old ideas and hymns; he put his own spirit of experience into them, and did not rest, till he also contributed to the great adventures which were taking place in the world.

It seems that every minute of the thirty-three years of his life was well utilised. He was very hardworking till the last moment of his life. "While in America", writes S. Puran Singh, "he went through, in two years, in spite of his strenuous public labours, almost the whole range of American literature".[7] Rama believed that the 'mind is the master of its spheres', and 'we build our future thought by thought'. While success lies in "Pushing, marching, labour and no more stagnant indolence." A fellow student of Rama at a time when he was preparing for the Bachelor of Arts examinations, reports how Rama never allowed his mind to idle away a single second. The student mentions :

> "I can show you that he (Rama) always has with him a paper on which there is always some scientific problem to reflect upon, some mathematical or philosophical subject, or some book or poem which he may commit to memory; he may be writing a poem or doing some sort of work, or other; he never wastes a moment when he is taking his meals. When he is in the toilet room, he is drawing with a piece of chalk, figures on the wall; when he goes to sleep, he is working at some problem or other, he is always dreaming of the same subjects which occupy his mind during the day."[8]

Rama did not form any convictions in haste. He worked constantly to base his cherished principles on a practical footing, and step by step rose higher in the scale of consciousness. Once his convictions were formed, he defended them against the heaviest odds. He was not a arm-chair philosopher speculating endlessly without any practical application of ideas into life. Rama says in one of his lectures, "Where thought does not" go over into action, and precept into practice, there results mental dyspepsia or spiritual constipation." The end and purpose of learning for him was to cultivate absolute purity of heart, build up one's character, and attain mastery over thoughts and actions. Obeying only the dictates of conscience, the promptings of his own inner voice. Rama built up his lofty character and managed to emerge (through a course of regular physical exercise and overdoses of milk) a "strong man of stage-like nimble activity." He had gathered in his personality virtues like self-reliance, faith, fearlessness, cheerfulness and forgiveness that enabled him to transform his body, life and mind, so that wherever he went he was a living temple of knowledge. Such was his extraordinary feat in the adventure of consciousness.

This short slender Brahmin boy of the Punjab had a soft handsome face of a typical Aryan cut with his eye-brows arched over deep black eyes which revealed the mystery and love of that which he only could 'tone' or 'atone'. In contrast with a big, broad, prominent forehead, showing high intellectual power, there was a feminine softness round his lips that kissed the light divine. Deep sincerity rained down from his eyes and his words overflowed in the exuberance of his spiritual sensations, charged with wild passion. There was nothing pedantic, shilly-shally or vague in Rama's character, songs and speeches. They are white rays of eternity—naked and simple. His sweetness was irresistible. The same applies to his poems which are crystals of sugar. We can suck and taste their sweetness condensed but cannot tell what that sweetness is. Mohammedans and Hindus loved him alike. The people of different races saw and recognised in Swami Rama some family likeness with themselves. "To see Rama was to feel inspired with new ideals, new powers, new visions and new emotions."[9] His high spiritual character impressed the American people so much that even President Roosevelt came to pay his respects to the Indian Sannyasi. An American gentleman noticing this strange luminous figure (in a steamer when Rama was about to land in America on the 16th of November, 1902), so quaintly dressed in orange, and so unperturbed when every one was bustling about, approached him and asked a series of questions.

The scene is worth transcribing here :

Gentleman : "Where is your luggage ?"
Rama : Rama keeps as much as he can carry himself.
Gentleman : Have you any money ?
Rama : No, Rama keeps no money ?
Gentleman : Are you landing here then ?
Rama : Yes.
Gentleman : You must have some friends to help you.
Rama : Yes, there is one.

Rama touched the shoulder of the questioner and softly said, 'you' ! This had a magnetic influence upon the man. He befriended Rama and looked after his needs while he was in America.

Rama was all love and extremely polite even to the lowest. "He addressed even his books, pens, pencils, knives and saws as living beings, and many a time I saw him bestowing his affection on them and talking to them so lovingly."[10] There was nothing carnal or animal in his love. It was all light, music and the joy of identity. He had channelised his vital energy, and through his yogic concentration turned it into the 'ojas' of divine delight. He did not love his wife for the sake of wife ; but for the sake of the Self. Thus he realised that married life is not a stumbling block in one's spiritual realization. To achieve this end Rama could exercise great control of mind whenever it was necessary. Once, when a ripple of animal passion surged through his heart, he managed to chasten and subdue it. He had actually lived up to the truth that Wordsworth expresses in his poem 'Laodamia'.

> Rebellious passions : for ".........to control the gods approve,
> The depth, and not the tumult of the soul;
> A fervent, not ungovernable love."

Once during his Talk at Faizabad, Rama narrated the incident, how once his mind was "polluted" by the wind of passion while he was a grihasta (a family holder) at Lahore. Once he went up to his roof and from there he happened to see a naked lady. This, because of 'the tumult of the soul' stirred the lake of his mind with the waves of "ungovernable love". But realising this immediately he started weeping and beating his breast in repentence. At that very moment, Rama firmly resolved to kill the evil designs of the mind, and never again to dance to its tune.[11] The enchantments of the flesh could not delude him, because he had come to this earth to shatter the fetters of hatred, shame, lust, pride of good conduct, fear, secretiveness, caste and grief.

How a wife can be a means to God-realization, and not an obstacle is beautifully expressed by Rama himself? In his lecture on "Married Life and Realization", Rama says, "According to the directions of the scriptures which were put in practice by Rama in his family relations, the wife had to wake up every morning and while Rama was feeling and realizing the Divinity, when he was lost in God...... then would the wife come, just as the Roman Catholics worship their images, so would she come and look at Rama...... see only the Divinity, God, nothing else. Thus sitting at a distance from Rama's body, she should fix her eyes upon Rama's forehead, ... she felt herself as transformed or merged in the body of Rama......there she felt and realized that her ownself was the Self of Rama...... This way she was a help to Rama, as it were, and Rama was a help to her".[12] He had known 'the way to the fulfilment of all desires', and with his Vedanta as "the Rod of Moses", he had come "out of misery to God within", so from him,

"Temptations, dangers, weakness are
Dispelled and driven out like the dark
Of thousand years when Light appears,
That Light to drive out sorrow, sin,
In consciousness of self within."

Another important element of Rama's character is fearlessness. He was a dare-devil type of person, who could even 'swallow death', drink all differences and,

"I chase as an huntsman,
I eat as I seize.
The hearts of the mountains.
The lands and seas."

Rama considered fearlessness as one of the essential principles of success. For him fear is the only sin to fear, because it is the cause of ignorance. But when one realises oneself to be eternal and immortal Spirit, whom fire cannot burn and sword cannot cut; then, how can such a person be afraid of anything in the three worlds. And

"Afraid of what ?

Of God ? Nonsense.

Of man ? Cowardice.

Of Elements ? Dare them.

Of yourself ? Know Thyself.

Say I am God."

How, according to Rama fearlessness is essential to success will be illustrated by a fact of his own personal experience. There came five bears at one time in the Himalayan forests face to face with Rama, but they did not molest him at all. Why was it so ? Simply on account of fearlessness. Rama was filled with that spirit, "I am not the body, not the mind; the Supreme Divinity I am, I am God; no fire can burn me; no weapon can wound me." In such a state of consciousness, nothing could alarm or harm Rama. The wild beasts recognised the Spirit's light in his sun-lit eyes and ran away. Again, "at one time a wild wolf was outstared; at another time a tiger likewise fled".[13] Thus, Rama was able to establish himself in the sunlike attitude of fearlessness.

He served without hope of reward, shedding light and life out of free love, exempt from praise and blame. He had no desire to be judged as a literary man. He sought no reward for his labours. People of California were struck, by the indifference with which he treated the eulogies on his work and life; and how he threw hundreds of newspaper cuttings into the Sacramento river. For he had not toiled in his life for name and fame, but to offer all his life and achievement as a token of love to God in the form of humanity. He had no personal self or ego and did not consider himself to be a doer of actions, for he sings :

"I never did a personal deed,
Impersonal Lord I am indeed,
In vain the raving critics fought,
The dupe of senses know me not.
I am for each and all the home,
I am the Om, the Om, the Om."

Rama had read the country's past, grasped the meaning of its history, and saw clearly the ideal which India stands for, and which is the purpose of her existence. So he urged us to make our thoughts conform to spiritual wisdom, to make our will in accordance with the realisation of the universal purpose of fellowship. Rama obeyed the will of the ages, and on his twenty-fourth birthday, that is in the October of 1897, he finally and completely dedicated himself to the life of spirituality. At the end of the year 1899, he proceeded alone to the woods, whence he emerged a full-blown Sannyasi in 1900. This was all in accordance with the tradition of India that values the life of renunciation above all other attachments. It is not an escape from life, but it is to embrace a wider life of universal brotherhood. "If you look into the Indus Valley Civilisation", writes Dr. Radhakrishnan, "You will find there the image of the mahayogi, the great ascetic, a man wrapped in contemplation, trying to improve his own nature, trying to establish some kind of conquest over his own passions. You find it again in the Buddha who sits under the Bodhi tree trying to lacerate his body and torture his mind in quest of truth..... This is the spirit which was exalted by this country for the last fifty centuries, so far as our history goes".[14] Rama knew that India has made an impression on the world, not so much on account of political wisdom, but on account of the spirit of austerity and the spirit of renunciation. The greatest of the religious seekers went out, casting aside all their possessions and family connections; silver and gold had they none, but they threw themselves into the whirlpool of this world and sought their spirit's salvation for all. They struggled hard and even sacrificed their lives in order to raise the status of humanity to a higher level. That is what Rama attempted to do when he disobeyed his father's call to join family life. And, living apart from 'the Ganga of renunciation' was 'hard' for him. The following letter to his father reveals the state of his mind at this stage :

> I bow down at your feet father, but the body of Rama is already sold; it is no more his. Now Rama makes no distinction between 'his' and 'mine'. Today, on the day of Diwali, I have renounced all attachment to my body, and given it over to my Master who has taken charge of it......You need not be anxious at all, for I am doing just as He orders me. Sri Krishna is the ocean of wealth for us Gosains. It is not good to leave off this real wealth and hanker after worldly riches.

Rama like Swami Vivekanand expounded in his life the austerity for which this country has stood. He was the exampler to tell us that man in all his scientific glory is nothing comparable to a man who has established supremacy over his own nature.

Rama was a Divine ministrel, the "Golden Oriole" (as his American friends called him) who had come with a mission to cast a spell and alter the colour of our consciousness. He had not come to build up sectarian organisations that keep themselves shut in water-tight compartments of obsolete dogmas and lifeless rituals. Like Emerson he never wanted followers, and himself shunned organisations that preached sectarian dogmas. He saw that all the knowledge of great secular personalities, could not match the light of Atma that is the source of intelligence, consciousness and knowledge. Personalities are masks and disappear like the waves after the storm, losing their identity in the deep below. What remains is the ultimate principle—I alone—one without another :

"I am what was, is, will be—
    Creations' ascent and fall,
The link, the chain of existence;
    Beginning and end of all."

When Rama was asked by some of his admirers to form a society, he flatly refused to do so, saying that all societies working in India were his own societies and that he would work through them. "Not to produce", Rama proclaimed, "millions of followers like Buddha, Mohammed, Christ or other prophets and incarnations, but to produce, evoke or express Rama himself in every man and child is Rama's mission. Trample over this body, eat up this personality, grind, digest and assimilate me, then and then alone you do justice to Rama." He walked in broad day-light on the paths of life and took people by surprise and taught Vedanta in the aurora of the rising sun, in the blushes of the rose and in the dimples of the pearly dew. The people who walked along with him, heard the echoes of his teachings "in the liquid music of the falling rain," in the throbs of "both man, bird and beast", and in the warblings of merry birds :

"The bird cooed softly and whispered low, the reason is very plain you know—
I love the sun shine, the gay green trees,
The whole of nature, the cool, cool breeze,
Why should I be sorry and pout,
When nature is laughing around and about ?
And is ready and willing to truly serve me
With every thing that is necessary !
If only I merrily sing and chirp,
And go happily, happily to work."

"In the morning", writes S. Puran Singh, "bloom of flowers opens his Bible. In the evening sparkle of stars flashes his Veda. His Koran is writ large in the living characters of myriad hued life".[15]

The word "Vedanta" that Rama often used does not connote any sectarian ideal. It is for Rama, not only the thirst for knowledge (Brahmajijnasa), but knowledge itself and the end of knowledge. It is the art of realising That (TAT) by which we know everything. It is to know and realise the Self, and then bring down its light to transform and divinise the mental, the vital and the physical parts of the earth for ushering in the new race of "Swamis". The term "Vedanta" declared Rama, "simply means the fundamental truth; the truth is your own, it does not belong to the Hindu more than to you. It belongs to nobody, everybody and everything belongs to it".[16] He proved in his own practice and experience that the Vedanta, the true spirituality brings life, power, joy, fire, glow, enthusiasm—all the beautiful positive things, never inertia, dullness and weariness. One must live the Vedanta philosophy and express it through one's behaviour and action. It is only through the dynamism of action, Rama believed, that a nation's culture remains alive and progressive. The Vedanta, however, preached by the Pandits without experience and application to life, is futile like books on the shelves eaten by worms. "The very best method of spreading the Vedanta philosophy", according to Rama, "is to live it, there is no other royal road".[17] The temple of Vedanta is not only the heart of man, but it is in the street, in our bed, in our study, in the dining room, drawing room and the parlour. These are the temples where you have to live and realise the Truth; these are the places where you have to work out your examples".[18] He was an "enthusiastic apostle of Vedanta", who declared triumphantly that 'Vedanta is no pessimism'. It takes us above the joy and sorrow of mundane existence to "the highest pinnacle of optimism" where

> "Peace like a river flows to me,
> Peace as an ocean rolls in me,
> Peace like the Ganges flows,
> It flows from all my hair and toes."

One of the important points to note in evaluating character and life of Rama, is that, he was one of the pioneer founders of modern India and the inaugurator of modern Indian Renaissance. Like Gokhale, Tilak, Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Swami Vivekanand, Sri Aurobindo, Gandhi and Sri Rama Krishna he attempted to re-awaken the national spirit. He, like them, found a new impulse of self-expression, which gave the spiritual force to a greater reshaping and rebuilding. Like them, he thought and worked incessantly to make this new birth a fact and a thing of immediate importance both to India and the world. In Rama, India recovered her ancient spirit, and revealed the possibilities involved in the re-arising that will prepare her to govern the future.

"The word", (Renaissance) writes Sri Aurobindo, "carries the mind back to the turning point of European culture to which it has been first applied; that was not so much awakening as an overturn and reversal, a seizure of christianised, teutonised, feudalised Europe by the old Graeco-Latin spirit and form with all the complex and momentous results which came from it. That is certainly not a type of renaissance that is at all possible in India".[19] Rama realised this ancient spirit and characteristic mould of "glorious Hind". He worked with a missionary zeal to bring back his people to something of the pristine glory of their ancestors. He saw this "giant Shakti" awakening into a new world, but being shackled in all her limbs by bonds self-woven by her past and bonds recently imposed from outside. He looked into the pages of history and after observing keenly he found that "so long as Vedanta was prevalent among the masses of India, India was at the highest point of her glory; she reigned supreme and was prosperous".[20] When this spirituality, the sense of the infinite native to her was ignored and fell into the "hands of a particular class" spirituality became morbid, hectic and was exposed to perilous reactions. There began the fall of India, and as ill luck would have it; it came under the domination of foreign rulers gradually and perverse European contact. This contact with Europe, apart from bringing many things to India also brought a religion, whose attitude in the words of Rama was "to look down upon the Self and to condemn the Self and call ourselves worms, vermins, wretches, slaves, sinners". Such a religion, Rama adds, "was imported into India, and when it became the religion of the masses, there began the fall of India".[21]

Renaissance in India is not merely a revival, "it takes up ancient wisdom", writes Dr. Radhakrishnan, "and tries to reconcile it with modern enlightenment; and wherever there is a struggle between the two, it cuts out with a drastic hand whatever is repugnant to reason or to the moral sense".[22] Rama jolted Indians out of their dogmatic slumbers and declared that only a living faith in God will enable us to overcome the paralysing sense of despair. It will also help us to effect a moral and spiritual revolution which shall embrace the whole world. He saw that, no doubt we are the descendents of the ancient Rishis of India, but we do not live in their age, and our struggle is with the twentieth century scientists, artists and workmen of Europe and America. He believed India can "survive"—only if she makes herself fit to live in the altered environments of the age. He goes on admonishing Indians with his volcanic voice, shaking them from their lethargy by saying, "If you are not willing and ready to assimilate the new light which is also the old, old light of your own land, go and live in Pitri loka with your fore-fathers. Why tarry here! Good bye!"[23].

Swami Rama Tirtha, the high priest of modern India was the representative voice of the true India, and no religion other than Hinduism could have produced him. He believed in the true "advancement" that is not only "intellectual" or "material" but "spiritual" touching "the real man" and not wasting itself on his 'mere shadow'. He reacted against the morbid European influence (accepting and assimilating what was best in it) and worked for a new creative combination in which the spiritual power of the Indian mind remains supreme. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, the Indian spirit "accepts whatever it finds sound or true, useful or inevitable of the modern idea and form, but so transmutes and Indianises it, so absorbs and transforms it entirely into itself that its foreign character disappears and it becomes another harmonious element in the characteristic working of the ancient goddess, the Shakti of India, mastering and taking possession of the modern influence, no longer possessed and overcome by it"[24] Rama like a "genuine spiritual soldier" worked for this ideal. He laid down his personal life in the interests of the land and by abnegating the little ego and turning himself in love towards people, he became the whole country. He wanted to evolve the national system of education based upon the ideals and principles of its great classics to enable us to utilise the resources of the country to "make the land most fertile, the mines more productive, the trade more flourishing, the bodies more active, the minds more original, the hearts more pure, the industries more varied and the nation more united."

Rama's sannyas (as some would suppose) was not "the flight of the alone to the alone", he thought action to bə indispensable, and his ideal was "renunciation through love in action." Action is the only way to put the ideal on a practical footing and realise one's aspirations. By joining science and poetry, fact and value Rama became the representative man of his age. To him science, art, philosophy and religion were the composite parts of the human personality. Their harmonious blending into human life was not a task for an empirical philosopher, but for a philosopher who, (as Coleridge puts it in 'Kubla Khan') "on honey-dew hath fed and drunken the milk of paradise." In accordance with the tradition of our country Rama emphasized the need for renunciation in public life. "While every thing in the world", writes Dr. Radhakrishnan, "is fraught with fear, for men, renunciation alone gives fearlessness."[25] According to Swami Vivekanada renunciation is the highest ideal of life. It is the principle of the good life, and according to it one has to live in the world and be at the same time out of it, doing one's actions without ego and remaining peaceful at the heart of storms.

If there is any call which Swami Rama made to us, it is to rely on our own spiritual resources. Man has "infinite power" and inexhaustible energy, and there is nothing inevitable that he cannot ward off. Only one should not loss hope. Ramá gave us fortitude in suffering; he gave us hope in distress and courage in despair. He told us not to be led away by appearances because deep down there is a purpose in the universe. We must try to cooperate with that purpose and try to achieve. He believed that "Regeneration is the realisation of God", and that this could be done by a six-fold path; through action, love, knowledge or law, fearlessness, purity and yoga—a word which he considered to be synonymous with contemplation or concentration. Rama observed that people hanker after power and do not realise "what an infinite power you can find at your command, when yourself stands in unity with the Self of the whole nation." Then only shall Her sons "in love unite"—

"And make them do their duty aright,
Fill them knowledge ever true,
And let their virtue shine anew."

The qualities of Swami Rama would have been of no avail, had he not possessed the poetic soul of the first calibre. His "Kavi-atma" had the "synthetic and magical power" that creates out of "airy nothing, a local habitation and name." He fulfilled the purpose of literature which is the good of the world—*visvasreyah kavyem*—redeem the world. "It is", writes Dr. Radhakrishnan, "not to mirror the glinting surfaces", so as to present a photographic picture of life, but to perceive the individual forms against the background of universal and operative principles. Art or literature is thus "the channel between spiritual vision and human beings. The poet is the priest of the invisible world, a divine creator, a kavi."[26] Rama saw, not only like Wordsworth, this world "in the spirit of love", but saw his own Self in the form of ladies and gentlemen, in which both the speaker and the listeners are lost in the "liquid flame of consciousness." Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, Emerson and Carlyle did not possess the illumined mind and divine madness of Rama who lived and moved in the state of samadhi with a dynamic vital and spiritualised glow of the body. They could not live so itensely while walking and taking in those transcendent heights of supramental consciousness where one becomes what he sees and gives vent to it in such a vehement mood :

"I hitch to my chariot,
    The Fates and the Gods,
With thunder of cannons
    Proclaim it abroad;
Shake ! Shake off delusion,
    Wake ! Wake up ! Be free,
Liberty ! Liberty !
    Liberty ! Om !

Rama was a "marching light", and the ideal he realised was not like Shelleys "desire of a moth for a star." The religious illumination of the following lines is the culmination of Self-realisation and can be realised only by living it through life; as Rama did. For example—in the following lines the theory and experience are blended together :

"Life or death, and health or disease,
In me like vapours rise, play and cease,
The straight line of youth, and the curves of age,
Are surface figures on me as a page.
Success or failure makes no difference to me.
For I am free, I am free, I am free !"

Poet-philosopher as he was, he appears before us by no means as a literary man, but as a poet who sings of the spiritual laws of life, man and nature, and of the Self and its play in myriad forms. This masterly mind in simpler, clearer and commoner accents sings of the deep music of life. For any one, who aspires to rise to the heights of Rama Consciousness, and then attempts to descend to its depths, the only alternative is to become Rama himself and respect Rama in his own Self. Because, according to Rama, to know Christ one must become Christ. There is no other way. His poems confound logic by their divine madness, and reveal the poet's powerful voice, eloquent character and inspiring realisation. The poems possess the spell of sincerity that "moved the audience to tears and then smiles of supreme satisfaction." He succeeded like a poet to "exalt in our eyes the commonest things into the highest Avtaras of Divinity." Puran writes about this magic influence of Rama's character. He says, "some people by his touch got tastes of a poet, others of a painter, some of a mystic and some of a soldier. Many common minds felt inspired to such an extent that they felt a distinct increase in their mental power."[27] Just as Rama was ever filled with bliss and peace and was constantly humming Om, so the poems too are a continual bubbling spring of joy that are not tainted by a touch of the morbid melancholy of romantic art. His laughter appears most of all in his poems, as he himself said "Rama always smiles and laughs."[28] And his writing does not smack of the principle "accentuated by a copy-righting, favour-currying and self-aggrandizing spirit."[29] The Manager of the Great Pacific Rail Road Company said, "his smiles are irresistible." At a large gathering of the Religious League at St. Loues' Exhibition, the local newspaper remarked that the only bright spot in the gathering was Swami Rama himself. Rama used to sing himself in solemn accents of deep and transparent sincerity, and drops of ecstasy used to roll down from his orange-coloured cheeks. "He would feel them so intensely that everyone present saw Rama dropping himself wholly in them, nay, Rama lost in them for hours together."[30]

Rama was a "poet of poets", who combined in himself the ecstasies of Chaitanya and the wisdom of the ancient Rishis. He had come to "shower oceans of love", and "bathe the world in joy". His muse rised to the yogic consciousness and the poems that follow are "the mantra of the Real". He saw all things in the light of his soul, and thoughts and things, questions of philosophy and religion, politics and society, all jostled together in his divine light to come out with refreshing beauty, wearing the garments of Rama-consciousness. "The great passions of Swami Rama", writes Dr. B.L. Atreya, "his poetic joys with beauty, his lyrical realization of unity with the people who came around him and his broad human sympathy were essentially different from a mere erudite Vedantist. His heart throbbed in harmony with the rhythm of life itself and he identified himself with the pain and pleasure of humanity at large."[31] Like a true poet he belonged to every country and according to Longfellow :

"Lives of great men all remind us,
We can make our lives sublime;
And departing leave behind us,
Foot-prints on the sands of time."

Rama brings to us the poet's religion, which is "not only found", says Rama, "in the Bible and in the most ancient scriptures but also in the latest works on philosophy and

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science...a religion which you have to practise and live in your everyday life...everywhere you have to live that religion."[32] He believes in "the poetry of facts", and "solid real feeling" as against a "flowery talk" and "speculative fiction". The greatness of his poetry does not depend upon his technical efficiency, for poetry cannot be reduced to mere technical dexterity. Emerson said in his preface to 'Parnassus' : "The great poets are judged by the frame of mind which they induce". And, when Rama's poems "induce" in us the sublime mood of deep joy, we can skip over many technical faults in a poem, and feel their effect of transport. The outward setting of the poems may often be crude, but they stand this test in ample measure. It was his lot like Emerson's 'Saadi' to be "joy-giver and enjoyer". He kept his life, "exempt from public hunt" and like Shakespeare felt :

> "Tongues in trees, books in running brooks,
> Sermons in stones and good in everything."
>
> (As you Like It).

In the twentieth century, it is high time to rise above names and forms, and not be misled and confounded by names and appearances. What Rama brings to us, should be taken on "its own merits", and seen if it can "stand the test of reason". He did not write merely to use beautiful words but made poetry an expression of eternal truth not limited to any form and appearance. Without that expression man is nothing but a being of darkness carrying light in his breast. We must rise to our divine status by reforming ourselves, and then we shall be able to realise Rama's poetry of spiritual vision as the rejection of only what is temporary. false and egoistic. Thus can we affirm the real.

This shall be our attempt in the following chapters : Out for the present we should understand that he had toiled not so much for selling his harvest as for distributing it. He would prefer like Wordsworth to be called a teacher and nothing else, because he never opened his lips, and posed as a teacher before he himself mastered the lessons he taught. In the solitude of nature, he made a thorough study of the Shastras and of the highest western thought and at the same time pursued his own independent researches. He took to this arduous task for the good of humanity, in the spirit of yoga, to offer its ultimate fruit to the divine. In his letter to Swami Shivaganacharya, which he wrote from Teheri in 1902, Rama writes : "I shall soon be imparting to or rather carrying into the business and bosom of humanity what I have been acquiring at the cost of incessant labour. I have a conscience and for no personal glory, no pain, no threats, no imminent danger, nor for fear of death even shall I preach what I have not realised to be truth."[33]

He stands on "truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth", and comes before us "not as as Indian, as a Hindu—A Vedantist", but as the pervading breath of poetry. "The world" Rama says must "listen to my words, just in the same spirit in which the college students listen to the words of their professors".[34] Because, there is in him that which baffles our reason and commands our respect; also because in his short span of life he touched the heights, which the understanding of philosophers in vain labour to approximate. Before his death by drowning in 1906, he wrote these following words of deep meaning :

> "I came down from the tops, knocked at the doors, awakened the sleepy, consoled one, wiped the tears of another, covered some, took off the veils of others......... I doff my hat and off I am. I keep nothing with me. No body can find me."[35]

It is better to abide by the same advice of Rama and give up the desire of reforming the world before reforming ourselves, because the moment, "we stand up as reformers, we become the deformers of the world."[36] Is the world too poor to beg our attention ? Are people any happier today ? Have our railways, our cars, our telegraphs, our telephones, our great ships and our scientific productions made people happier ? In the opinion of Rama our Mahatmahoods, reformerships, honours, offices and relations are no more than dreams of last night and past incarnations. Why not reform ourselves first and win the "victory over the local self", by looking within and sincerely heeding to Rama's clarion call :

Wanted ! Wanted ! Wanted !

Reformers—

Not of others,
but of themselves.
Who have won—
Not university distinctions,
But victory over the local self.

Age—The youth of Divine Joy.

Salary—Godhead.

APPLY SHARP.
With no begging solicitations but commanding decisions

To—The Director of the Universe.
Your Own Self.

OM ! OM ! OM !

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1

Inspiration—Nature and Purpose of Poetry

"Genius", writes Dr. Radhakrishnan, "is not made by effort".[1] The same truth has been emphasised in another manner by the old Latin phrase that says : "*Poeta nascitur, non fit*", meaning thereby that "a poet is born, not made". This can be aptly applied to Rama who never consciously aspired to bloom as a literary artist and no idea of "fame" (in Milton's phrase) "spurred" him to "live laborious days". He never wrote for writing sake, nor spoke for speaking sake. Rama sang spontaneously like birds in the forests, and in a fit of muses' madness opened his lips when he had some thing to give. "I try hard", spoke Rama, "for gathering facts, but when they are mine, I stand on a rock proclaiming my message of truth for all time". He was not a mere entertainer, but a prophet who had achieved the heights of inspiration by eating "the heavenly manna", and had drunk "the heavenly wine" that Plato in "Phaedrus" calls "heaven sent madness". Plato recommends this madness for a genuine creation and the poets who are in possession of it have done glorious service to the culture of humanity.

Poetry for Rama was a "divine instinct" passing beyond the range of "common sense" and transcending the limitations of the fickle moods of human personality "My definition of pure poetry", writes George Moor, in his Introduction to Anthology of Pure Poetry is "some thing that the poet creates outside of his own personality". Great convictions of life arise out of the depths of intuition and are translated by the intelligence into forms of sensual perception. Poetry which is "truth", not "individual" and "local" (as Wordsworth calls it) : but "general and operative", cannot be arrived at by the mere operation of the ordinary understanding and the skilful play of words. Senses, mind and intelligence are imperfect vehicles that cannot transcend the boundary walls of time, space and causation. The poet's vision (Darsana) includes fancy imagination, sensibility and thought, but it transcends them all. Only then Poets "marvellous art" imparts transparency to objects of all sorts. For, genuine poetry, if there be any in the poet's works, springs out of the spirit of man, and imparts its creative energies to the forms of the outer world :

"From my Radium of heart,
X-Rays do start,
To the objects of all sorts,
Transparency impart,
On all sites and parts.
What a marvellous Art !

To Rama, Spirit or Atma transcends the triple knot of existence, but at the same time it also penetrates body, life and mind. In order to feel its life-invigorating touch, the poet has to rise above the four layers of consciousness (anna, prana, manas, vigyan) to Ananda or Delight, where the world is transformed into the fairy land and all is I and Bliss.

"O Joy ! the fairy world, my bride,
Nay, talk no difference, wonder of wonders,
Myself the bride-groom, I the bride."

Thus comes the role of inspiration as the source of all genuine and sublime creations of art. If the artist lacks this gift of Heaven, his technique is of no avail. Again if he is unable to ascend like Emerson's 'Merlin', the heights of "Paradise" by "the stairway of surprise"; then he is like a deer wandering restlessly in search of the musk that is within him. Spirit or Atma, for Rama, is truth and a poem for him is truth-force, truth-light and truth-thought. The test of Truth for him is its eternal persistence or changeless continuity, that remains the same "today, yesterday and for ever". In contrast to it, is "the scene of the changing shows", that is to be negated if we are to affirm the "Changeless One". Everything being in a state of flux, motion can give us nothing but motion, while the consciousness of motion cannot be due to the motion. Scientifically, motion cannot be possible unless there is a changeless substance as the cause of the phenomena. The poet gives expression to this truth in the following lines that have the effect of a mantra;

"See in this scene of changing shows,
There is a changeless One that glows,
In seeming death, decay and pain,
It changes dress but comes again."

The poem is a condensed expression of metaphysical truth sung musically, and it carries scientific plausibility and the force of religious conviction. The poet according to Rama becomes inspired when he is above the idea of self or ego, when he has no thought of "I am writing poetry".[2] The poet loses his personality, becomes one with the idea and is possessed by it. "If a sparrow comes before my window" Keats wrote, "I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel." This deliberate suspension of individuality is an utter submission to the real, we become what we behold. To the poet, all true work is a "rest", a sort of intellectual passivity, a perfect purity and peace. It is out of the depths of these tranquil moments that ideas and words leap out in a rhythmic measure. According to Rama the greatest worker, when he is at the height of his work, may seem in the eyes of others to be engaged in strenuous efforts, but from his own stand-point he is not conscious of all this, because his mind is absorbed in the work to such a degree that 'I am working' is entirely gone, the small enjoying ego is absolutely lost and the heart, soul and sense, being in concert mood, is laid asleep.

In body and become a living soul
While with an eye made quite by the power of joy,
We see into the life of things,
(Wordsworth—Tintern Abbey)

and visualizes, not what man sees, but what God sees and creates; the earths, the heavens, the birds and beasts. He then "enters there as life and soul" :

"And from the husk of body and mind,
Is thrashed out with devotion and Jnana,
That Being, clothed in forms and names,
That self same Sat Art Thou, the same, the same."

Rama believes that when a thinker, a poet, a scientist or a worker attunes himself to the state of abstraction and rises to the heights of resignation to such a degree that no trace of personality is left in him, and Vedanta is practically realised, then only "God, the Master Musician takes up in his own Hands the organ or instrument of his body and mind and sends forth grand vibrations, sweet notes and exquisite symphonies out of him".[3] When the poet's mind is seated at home and is fast to his native centre, the sweetest melodies spring from him naturally spontaneously and without effort like the summer showers. It was much easier for Rama to write poetry when it was raining outside than on other occasions. About this Rama says, "when it is about to rain or when it is drizzling, of itself the mind becomes elevated, and the brain is thrown into a poetic mood, and everything becomes so inspiring, and no apparent cause can be assigned for this extraordinary exaltation except the union of heaven and earth through rain".[4]

Science tells us that the cause of the inspiration of heaven is what is called saturation, a state of closeness when people expect rain. Rama compares mind to the atmosphere or the air, and when it gets saturated with an idea, it permeates and pervades the mental cosmos and fills the soul, until in the words of Blake "we become what we behold". Then only the melodious verse, the splendid songs began to rain down from the poet. It is complete surrender, handing over the machine, the organ, the musical instrument to the Great Musician, and rejecting every thing that is an obstacle in this dedication. "So long as the child, wants to keep the organ to itself, and does not want the great organist or musician to handle the organ, only notes of discord will be emanated by the organ".[5] Rama tells us from his personal experience that while living in the deep forests of the Himalayas, it often happened that when his mind was in a transparent state, the most splendid ideas the wonderful power came into his mind by inspiration. He further tells us that "all books are written through inspiration—the Bible, the Upanishads, the Vedas, Milton's works, Emerson's work and Ingersals' work even though Ingersal is not a so called Christian, Spencer's works are all just as inspired as the Vedas, the Koran or the Bible".[6]

This is how, according to Rama, the great writings emanate from the poet's soul as a gift of God. Inspiration for Rama is 'God doing', a gift of "oracular genius" and perception of the fact that the form is a crystallization of thought, and that form and thought spring out of the soul, as a plant from the seed. This builds up his organism of art. The poet in Rama follows the order, and handles the individual forms in such a way as to bring out their universal and characteristic elements. Only, he is not bound like Aristotle's artist in a texture of literary form and structure. He subordinates and negates the form in emphasizing the primacy of the soul. From his concept of poetry we cannot construct the normative scale of values according to which the work of art combines the communication of profound insight with the satisfaction of formal perfection. His lectures and poems, unfortunately have not had the revision of the author himself. Rama would certainly have altered much, and possibly abbreviated much. "He would have", writes Puran Singh, "corrected also the metrical form of his poems which have been clearly put down as the inspiration came to him and without laboured correction".[7]

Rama certainly differed in his use of "sounds and qualities", "metre and rhyme" which are supradded in the poems according to Coleridge. But, Rama sticks to his spiritual vision and its potential power that can wrest language from nature whose working is propelled by the Spirit itself. It is:

"The same that works thy eyes and hands,

The same doth move what by thee stands,

The one within is all without,

That one does bring what comes about.

No foreign force, no foe, no other

Exists by thee whatever."

In thus identifying his consciousness with the univeral consciousness, Rama quickly passes to a realm beyond technical discussion. Even Coleridge, when inquiring into the peculiar qualities of a poem is constrained to believe that these formal tags of rhyme and meter "do not arise from the nature of the content but have been imposed on it in order to make it more easily memorised".[8] Rama does not like this imposing of anything extraneous to his vision. He believed like Carlyle that "what is deep is musical", and his words are loaded with ideas "as immortal as the heart of man". These intuitive ideas spring out of deep recesses when the mind is brought under the grasp of the Spirit. The words leap out from the heart as do speak out of the fire. Though intuition rises above reason, yet it does not contradict reason, but fulfils it. It is what Wordsworth calls "Reason in her exalted mood", and what Emerson terms "the intellectual inebriated in nectar". The real creation is due to inspiration or intuition. while the art of explanation is an adventure of the mind. Science has its proper role of analysing this world as construction, just as grammar has its legitimate office in analysing the syntax of a poem. But world as a creation is greater than mere construction; it is more than mere syntax. It is the poem, which we are likely to forget when grammar takes hold of our minds. We lose ourselves in making elaborate approaches according to the rules of scientific strategy and fall into the quagmire of rituals and ceremonials, rules and facts. As a result we do not pay any heed to the assurance of the poet, and take up the path that can always keep us :

"................................fresh and new,
To every secret treasure clue,
Is to assert the real Self,
And do deny deluding pelf".

Rama shuns academic affection or pedantic world display. He believes that grammar is the "grave of language", and if we try to save it and keep it invariable, it will choke and kill language. The poet has his own distinct medium of language, and his own individual use of it. With his magic touch he transforms it into a special vehicle of his own creation. He is a law unto himself, and makes his own rules by breaking ordinary conventions. His wise-eye can apprehend the dance of the cosmos like Goethe as "my creation", the procession or manifestation of Atma, and identifying himself with That, he becomes what he aspires to be. The pivotal fact in his poetic organism is that 'I' and the tireless pursuit to rediscover it. This is the subject-matter of his poetry and philosophy. In fact, the note of Self-reliance is the quintessance of Rama's philosophy. To Rama 'I' is not body, mind, sense-powers, intellect and life-force; but what penetrates all these, and uses them as vehicles of its expression. The true organic form of the poem is achieved after the Self-realisation that enables the poet to perceive through his occult eyes what Coleridge glimpsed in his 'Dejection Ode' :

"Ah, from the Soul itself must issue forth,
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud,
Enveloping the earth,
And from the soul itself must there be sent,
A sweet and powerful voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element".

After having stretched 'I' to infinity, Rama found all knowledge, joy and power in the assertion of 'I am'. From him, this is the only reality; the world is nothing but the idea dancing around 'Me', the apparent sun is My reflection and :

> "Lo ! the trees of the wood are my next of kin,
> And the rocks alive with what beats in me;
> The clay is my flesh, and the fox is my skin.
> I am fierce with the gadfly, and sweet with the bee,
> The flower is naught but the bloom of my love,
> And the waters run down in the tune I dream,
> The sun is my flower uphung above".

Such poetry that sounds the unfathomable chambers and magazines of the soul cannot be the work of "coil and number", "rule and pale forethought". Rama used words not according to technical necessity, but according to the pressure of the spiritual vision or the need of the psyche. Whatever be the lapses into caprices and wilfulness of which the critics may find him guilty. his utterances should be judged as sudden flashes and wild raptures of the transcendent reality. In his case, as with Emerson, we must "keep down talent" and look at his poems with the fresh "look" of a child, who inhales the rapture of delight instinctively and without any predilections of his own. Rama's language is that of the sweet innocent child, the birds, the waving tree branches, that of the sun, moon, and stars. His language runs under the external shows of the world and people and penetrates far under the surface thoughts and dreams of men. His elastic and vigorous thoughts keep pace with the sun and are ever awake for a poetic and divine life. To him intelligence, imagination and ears are not the true recipients of poetic delight; but they are channels and instruments of the true creator and hearer which is the soul. Technique, therefore, is out of place in a scheme of things which is organic rather than analytical. Rama should not be judged by anything he can do, but the sublime power with which he changes the minds of others, and makes them act. No purpose is served by praising or condemning his poetry on technical grounds; we must find him an opener of doors to those who have the capability to digest and assimilate the truth, power and joy his work embodies.

The language the poet uses is an incarnation of his soul that can be spelt out in each throb and pulse of Nature. The elemental movements of Nature, its forms and changes, when reflected in the cosmos of spiritualized-mind, are transformed into emotions, feelings and ideas that gain their outlet in words and images of the poetic landscape. The poet has not to make any struggle for the words; they are the finite instruments of the infinite mind. The poems are the welling up of the life currents, the spiritual sensations of a great creative power, and their cadence, sound-effects and repetition are seen as the movements that rise and fall in the psyche of the poet creating an architecture of its own. The form that comes into being is the condensed expression of an illumined feeling, an exalted reason that glorifies :

"God is within and around me",

and communicates ideas that are inspiring in character, lofty in tone, instructing in nature; and, above all, ecstatic in essence; because for the poet :

"All good is for ever mine".

The God that Rama asserts is not any extra-cosmic Deity that dwells beyond the clouds. It is the Supreme Person or Purushottama that embraces the supramental, mental and vital beings. Yet it is not however a person, but the principle and presence that permeates all persons. It can be felt as a "sacred current" that "flows" in "dreams", and "glows" and "grows" and :

"At times, it flows the banks

Of senses and mortal frame.

It spreads in all the world and flows,

It inundates in wild repose".

For the fear of Him, the sun shines, death moves on his errands, and Nature, following the hidden plan, marches to the rhythm of cause and effect. It is the Delight at the heart of creation :

> "For this the sun, he daily rose,
> For this the universe did roll.
> All births and deaths for this.
> Here comes rolling, surging wonder undulating Bliss,
> Here comes rolling laughter, silence".

This "silence" or Wordsworth's "serene and blessed mood" is the fountain-head of all knowledge, power and joy. For when the spirit is disciplined in silence, then only does it become probable for it to enter into the mystic realms. "Rama would lose himself in the midst of his public lectures, repeating his sacred syllable OM ! OM !, so much so that the American friends of Rama remarked that he seldom lived in the body centre".[9] He had attained that state of spiritual elevation or Samadhi where :

> "Neither sun shines there, nor sparkles the moon,
> Pranas and sound are hushed into silence.
> All life resposes in soul's sweet slumber,
> No God, no man, no cosmos there, no soul,
> Not but golden calm and peace and splendour".

This spiritual passion of limitless grandeur enhances the elusiveness of the poet's personality like the seers of the Vedas, who are more than they seem to be. It takes us where all imagination and language stop and lands us in the world of indescribable Reality. In a higher manner, the poet communicates the wisdom of delight and paints the air, the sun, the mountain and the elements of nature in such a way that we feel in his description a touch of sublimity that thrills us beyond measure. This "height" or "elevation" cannot be attained by people involved in the "cupidity and stupidity" and the grovelling and craven concerns of the age. Its purpose is "that of giving the world something high, and of noble significance".[10] Longinus believes that the power of the poet does not lie in "Persuasion but ecstasy—or lifting the reader out of himself."[11] The sublime emotion is perpetuated by the perpetual cultivation of the poet's sensibilities, while the excellence which he achieves is the result of "Chittashuddhi", the purification of the heart. It is to "give up", Rama says, "all claim upon body, give up all selfishness, all selfish connections, all thoughts of mine and thine and rise above it". At another place Rama says, "You have simply to break through the cocoons of desires which imprison you : have simply to undo what you have done". This purification of the heart is the first stair of the temple of 'Atma-deva' ; and after ascending the various steps of consciousness, man arrives at the highest fulfilment. It is not possible that "those who lives are trivial and servile should flash out anything wonderful and worthy of immortality".[12] Rama, like Emerson realised that "the sublime vision comes to the pure and simple soul in a clean and chaste body". It is the infinite enlargement of the heart that instils awe and delight and gives the feeling or immensity that cannot be possessed :

"Oh ! How could I get my Love's Likeness,
    Could anything like him be conceived,
Could he in camera be received ?
    Could artist stand to take his picture.
Could he appear in colour and figure ?
    The camera of form did melt away.
His flood of light was too much, too much.
    Oh ! How could I get my Love's Likeness".

Like Longinus and Emerson, Rama too does not attach much importance to the ideal of correctness. He prefers the faulty but impressive work of genius to the flawless creation of the mediocre. For "correctness" in a writer may be described as a human virtue, but "sublimity" raises him to divine heights.

This, for Rama, is the royal road to inspiration, which lifts us above physical limitation and mental modifications, and makes us live in a perpetual state of spiritual consciousness. It is nothing less than crucifixion. One has to lose one's lower self and assert the supremacy of the real Self;

because out of its depths spring ideas of infinite magnitude and power that elevate and inspire. Rama says in a lecture on 'The Nature of Inspiration' delivered in U.S.A. that, "There is no real enjoyment except in renunciation, there is no prayer except in renunciation". In true inspiration, the idea of 'I know' and 'I do it', is absent. It is therefore that one cannot be in a state to write poetry and at the same time be an enjoyer of it. The artist must be sacrificed to his art, that is, he must rid of the false ego, and sacrify the little self and rise above it. When there is no duality in the mind then all object-consciousness is at rest and the point of inspiration is reached. "When", Rama says, "Tennyson is beyond all idea of Lord Tennyson, then alone is he the poet Tennyson. When Berkeley is no proprietary, copyrighting Bishop, then alone is he the thinker Berkeley. When Hume is above his personality which the biographer proclaims, then alone he is, the philosopher Hume. When Huxley is not the historian's Huxley and is the all, as it were, then is he the scientist Huxley"...[13] But as soon as the artist begins to accept reviews, favourable criticism and the applause and flattery of the people, the power goes out immediately. In the opinion of Rama, compliments, criticism and diseases are equally fatal if we regard the Self as subject to them. Rama wants us to look upon compliments and criticisms even as Rama looks upon physical elements merely as footmen from God's Durbar. As soon as the Self in man occupies the Durbar throne, they obey him; because, to him, now, like Rama-Badshah :

"No physical action, good or evil,
    No mental action, virtuous or ill.
No shame or fame, no praise or blame.
    Could taint me e'er, no kind of game.
Noting but the flood of glory !"

Why cannot anything "taint" or mar Rama's "flood of glory" ? Because, he has practically followed and realised the yoga of the Gita. He is the poet-yogi, who lives in the world, centered in divine consciousness, and like the sun is working incessantly without any fever of doing. For he sings :—

"I never did a personal deed,
Impersonal Lord I am indeed.
In vain the raving critics fought,
The dupe of senses know me not.
I am for each and all the home,
I am the Om ! the Om ! the Om" !

Rama never took things into himself. People often passed unfavourable remarks as he passed along the streets, but such words had no effect on him; because he did not take them and believe them to be true. In the same manner when some great work is done through us, "it is folly", Rama points out, "to take the credit for it, because when it was being done, the credit-seeking ego was entirely absent, else the beauty of the deed should have been marred. The consciousness of 'I am doing' was altogether absent. The thing came from God of its own accord"...[14] Rama tells us that through constant practice he achieved a state of consciousness above fear, above anxiety, above annoyance and the credit seeking ego.

The supreme kernel of his poems is the supreme ethical force and spiritual rapture. His poems are man-making, spermatic, provoking and challenging. His short eagle-flights of songs delight us with their philosophical thought, ethical feeling, religious sentiment, aesthetic values and their guide-lines in spiritual sadhana. We can say about Rama's poems what Wordsworth said about his own new poetry; that there is not a single poem which does not contain any moral or any law of thought. This echoes the Kantian concept that the moral idea is a "categorical imperative".[15] This makes the poet, the individual agent, "virtually a law-giver".[16] In Rama, virtue flowers into beauty, love becomes limitless consciousness, and the poems are transformed into the Great Lyric of majestic spiritual vision. "His cities", writes Puran Singh "were made of light. In his lanes Buddha still walked with his begging bowl and

Christ still preached the truth. No great man could die in the atmosphere of Rama's mind. It was such a perennial prana that even the dead who came there enjoyed resurrection".[17] Rama's poems are not designed to colour and figure petty human emotions, nor a deliberate attempt to give aesthetic delight; they are meant rather to stimulate the moral or spiritual grandeur of the human soul.

Rama urges us to create a new civilization of thought and culture with the Self's spontaneity, joy-fullness, surprise and ease. He asks us to understand how imperative it is for us to :

"Shake ! Shake off Delusion,
Wake ! Wake up ! Be free,
Liberty ! Liberty !
Liberty ! OM" !

Otherwise we may continue to live on the surface and "getting and spending lay waste our powers", but never be able to fathom the untrammelled depth of our soul. It is his passionate desire to affirm order in the universe, and make us recognise our godhead by "diverting the thoughts from objects of sense" and controlling the passions "with wisdom's reins". This order that he affirms with full faith is not based upon the forms that are being metamorphosed every movement, because these "fleeting forms" of the world are :

"Mere morning charms,
They dawn and die
Are Mayavic lies,
And get snapped all ties".

The poet's perpetual endeavour is to express the spirit of things; to pass beyond the brute body and search for the life and reason which cause it to exist; to see that the object is always flowing away, whilst the spirit which is the cause of it subsists :

"These things that seem
Are nothing but dreams
Of that Eternal Sun
The changeless One".

In truth, Rama has no theory of form to inculcate; he simply communicates an enthusiasm for poetry, discovering in it the highest form of worship which his heart offers to the ultimate reality, the Atma-Deva. He obeyed the law of his being, and in his own mind sought to create the model for his art with its own compelling probability, beauty, quaint expression and grandeur of thought.

The Soul or the Atmic-darshan is the sine-quo-non of Rama's organis theory of poetry. Whenever a man is made sensible that he is an infinite soul, and that the potentialities of creation lie dormant within him, his power of thought abstracts the mind from hallow, dry and creaking formality, and for a short time his intellect or mind gets absorbed in the 'hard, stern reality of the Atman, God', then, according to Rama wonderful discoveries and inventions flow out of the artist's heart, Thus, refusing to accept good models and what the people worship here; he resolves to himself to abide by the laws of his soul. He knows that it is spiritual power that wins, and that knowledge and assimilation of which is the only fundamental requisite for organic creation. That is to have the direct experience or vision of the soul which is possible only to the man of imagination, who has cultivated the habit of silent meditation, and who is living in communion with Nature, susceptible to her enchantment, cumulative concentration, meditation and Tapas creates a state of mind in which the poet is wrapped in a spiritual ecstasy and where for the time being, his mind finds itself expanded into an immeasurable consciousness. According to Rama it is "that complete retirement of the mind within itself, during which the senses are locked up; that intense meditation in which no idea can invade; that firm straight forward progress of thought deviating into no irregular sally; the perfect yoga where the mind becomes one with the subject", and bursts into such exquisite songs :

"Traced in the midnight planet's blaze,
Or glistening in the morning dew.
Whatever is beautiful or fair,
Is but Thine own reflection there.

Thine is the starry moon of night,
The Twilight eve—the dewy morn;
Whatever is beautiful and bright,
Thine hands have fashioned to adorn.
Thy glory walks in every sphere,
And all things whisper, "God is here".

Rama's poetry must be reckoned as a great oriental work of art that does not easily reveal its secrets to one who comes to it, solely in a mood of aesthetic curiosity. Like Walt Whitman, we can say about his poetry that "No one will get at my verses who insists upon viewing them as a literary performance, or an attempt at such performance or as aiming mainly towards art or aestheticism".[18] One has to enter into the poetic world of Rama through reflection, "alochana" and through identity. It is through 'Tapas', proclaim the seers of the Upanishads that God creates the forms of the universe. It is the kindling of the spiritual fire and the contemplation, meditation and concentration within whose orbit, the poet delights. So his work is to be seen and appreciated, in moments when one is capable of long and deep meditation, and is as little weighed down as possible by superficial material life. Like Indian art, Rama's poetry is intuitive and spiritual. It must be seen with an intuitive and spiritual eye. A simple childlike vision, purified and purged of all prejudices can get at it. While the Supreme is bright and clear to religious intuition or poetic insight, it is misty and dark to the cold intellect. The finite intellect reduced this grand world poem to the polarities of self and not-self, organism and environment, and leaves us there without revealing to us the final unity in which these relative opposites rest. The intuitive insight by which we can see God, intellect cannot give us; while the poet who has regained his childhood in wisdom, is according to Emerson, a 'man-child' the ideal man of future civilisation. He is the blessed child of nature, and his 'creed', in the words of Wordsworth, is 'delight and liberty'. By virtue of this he rises to the status of a 'mighty prophet' or a 'seer-blest' and becomes the 'Eye among the blind' who has the power to call.

"Logic and Science, poor Bunglers",

that with their half-light and half-truth can come and "see Me and have cured their blindness".

According to Rama, we can obtain this condition; we can become the 'man-child' and sincere. "If you are not a prophet", declares Rama, "there never has been anything true of God. If you are not God there never was any God, and never will be". This expansion of the soul can be achieved when we awake from 'sleep', break down the barrier of individuality and relax the despotism of the senses. We have, however, to pay the price for this attainment. It is to give oneself away. Our soul can realise itself truly only by denying itself; by divesting itself of all the thick vestures of body, life and mind; and by tearing away the 'blinds' the inordinate lower physical-vital instincts and the false mental modifications. It is what the poet exhorts :

"Take off all thy clothes,
And thyself do disclose,
Tear, out the blinds,
Don't you hide behinds,
No curtain, partition,
Name, fame or position,
Body, mind or possession,
Loves, hatred and passion,
Claims, clinging, designs,
All "mine and thine" renounce, resign".

The poet himself strives to make his "daily toil a song of praise" by cleaning himself of "every hateful thought", by making his life and body simple and straight like a flute for the Master poet to fill with music. "Make", says Rama, "your whole body a flute. Empty it of selfishness and fill it with divine breath". So long as the intellect, emotions and will or bound in the realm of nature; so long as the fragments of desire, fame and name, disgrace and honour persist to tease us, the ideal cannot be reached. Even the lure of writing and lecturing should not urge the poet to assert his ego. He follows what the Upanishad says, "Thou shalt gain by giving away. Thou shalt not covet". Our desires do the greatest wrong to our spirit of aspiration. They deaden our consciousness and cause mental dissatisfaction and spiritual bankruptcy, and limit the scope of our Self-realization. Some poet, whom Rama quotes has aptly said :

"Pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize flower, its bloom is shed,
Or like the snow fall on the river,
A moment white, then lost forever.
Or like the Bareoli's race,
That flits ere you can find its place,
Or rainbows' lovely form,
Vanishing amid the storm".

All these wordly objects on which we depend are fleeting and throw us into the "deep abyss of helplessness, anxiety and pain". According to Rama, the law of Nature is that whenever a man believes practically in the outside object and wealth, he must fail. So let us not be dupes of our senses, and knit the dark cocoons of desire. When a poet or an author, according to Rama, begins to assert his egoistic claims, the "mercenary spirit of exacting charge enters into his consciousness; then the walls of his heart become imperfect with the result he falls from the heights of creation". Knowing this fact, the poet is enraptured to give overt expression to the following truth :

"Away with writing,
Off with lecturing,
Out with the fame and name,
Honours ! Nonsense.
Disgrace ! Meaningless.
Are these toys the end of life ?"

It is the assertion of the superficial self against the true Self that sets up this disunion and the arrogance of exclusiveness. It is egoism, the root cause of evil which is set up through ignorance or "avidya". It gives rise to many foolish distinctions and makes man slave to the fancied goods of wealth and property. Our selfish desires become our fetters and our possessions become our limitations. Like the mist on the midnight stream, these obscure our vision and make us forget our true being. In the words of the "Yoga-Vasishta", the "desire for worldly objects is the most dangerous enemy.... It destroys his wisdom, upsets the balance of his mind, and throws him into the deep and dark well of infatuation. It causes him to suffer the pans of hell". Thus :

"All objects sweet,
Attract but cheat,
They treat, deceive, defeat".

The appearance of all objects is called "avidya". They do not exist in reality, just as no water really exists in a mirage river. By "appearance", is meant that which reveals itself to the sense and the discriminating mind. It is perceived as sound, touch, form, taste and odour. Out of these appearances ideas are named and formed. In fact, these appearances are the manifestations of mind itself. In the "Yoga-Vas'shta", it is said, "Appearance is that which partakes both of reality and unreality, but which is neither absolutely. The world experience as a whole also falls within the realm of appearance". The world, its inmates and relations are vanishing qualities, such "stuff" as "dreams are made of". The poet-seer of yogic attainments has the right knowledge, and does not regard names and appearances as realities. Knowledge of the appearance belongs to simple and ignorant minds, who are frightened at the thought of being unborn. They cannot comprehend the purport, nor follow what Bhatrhari meant, by laying open the sense of worldly vanity and exalting the effective strength of renunciation in the following verses :

"Enjoyment of embodied beings are fleeting like the quick play of lightning within a mass of clouds; life is as insecure a drop of water attached to the edge of a lotus-leaf and dispersed by the wind; the desires of youth are unsteady; realizing these quickly, let the wise firmly fix their minds in yoga, easily atttainable by patience and equanimity"[19].

When the reflection dawns, and man looks at himself in the light of thought; he knows the nature of body and mind. He finds the cause of suffering and misery, and perceives the universe as the expression of the mind; a huge dream whose forms of time, space and causation are assumed by the mind. The "Munduka Upanishad" says, "the different objects cognized in dreams are illusory. For the same reason the objects seen in the waking state are illusory. The nature of objects is the same in the waking state and dream". Thus Rama sings :

"Is all at last,
A dream of past ?
Is nothing true,
He, I or you ?
Is all a myth,
This kin and kith ?"

Great poets and thinkers have always recognised this illusory existence in which we knit the web of our smiles and sniffles. They listen to the "still and sad music of humanity", and call us to awake from the ignorance of this sorry-scheme of things, and transcend life's "weariness fever and fret", because, in the words of Shelly :

"Nothing beside remains Round the decay,
Of that colossal wreck boundless and bare".

(Ozymandias)

The poet becomes dissatisfied with the evanescent and myriad world of forms preceived by the senses. It seems to him a reverie, as empty as a dream. There is a dissatisfaction with the world. All knowledge, all attainments, and all powers appear to be an aimless process as of creation and destruction, from which no meaning for the individual human existence can be derived. All must pass away and :

"The flowers fade,
Light turns to shade,
Our loves are changed,
Beauties deranged,
Names, fames do wane,
All glory is vain !
Fickle, transient is all,
This show, it palls".

Carlyle, too, in "Sartar Resartus", saw this "creation" like a "glorious Rainbow". He was surprised to see "how we clutch at shadows as if they are substances; and sleep deepest while fancing ourselves most awake". In the same book he exclaims : "...These limbs, whence had we them; this story Force, this life-blood with its burning passion ? They are dust and shadow; a shadow system gathered round our Me...". Emerson, on the basis of his experience, also affirmed the dreamy nature of this existence and the inscrutable power of Maya to create such illusions as are impenetrable and :

"Weaving webs innumerable,
Her gay pictures never fail,
Crowds each other, veil on veil
Charmer who will be believed,
By man who thirst to be deceived".

The poetic aspiration, which gives an insight into the Real, must necessarily cross this first stage of spiritual discipline, and negate all that is temporary and impermanent. Otherwise, one may knock at the doors of poetry but will not gain entrance into the world of enchantment and romance. This negation is a bold step taken by the poet who has an intuitive bent of mind, and a unique capacity of philosophy. Arthur Schopenhaur considered this negation as the first step in grasping the nature of the ultimate reality. The consciousness of the infinite in us proves itself by our joy in giving ourselves out in abundance, and in our following the rhythms of inner mystic realms. Self-denial is the path to Self-realisation, so we have to conquer the world, caring naught for it. According to Schopenhaur, any one, to whom men and things have not at times appeared as mere phantoms or illusions, has no "capacity for philosophy". He observes: "The Vedas and Puranas have no better simile than 'a dream' for the whole knowledge of the actual world, which they call the web of Maya, and they use none more frequently".[20] This negation or renunciation is not an escape from life, the denial of social values, domestic ties and turning indifferent to all material and cultural needs. It is not a world-negating spiritual quest, but the world transforming spiritual activity and the individual's search for salvation is for the sake of all, because "I love the earth and feel its very life is part of me". According to Rama, renunciation has nothing to do with our place, position and bodily work. "Renunciation simply places you at your best; places you on your vantage ground. Renunciation simply enhances your powers, multiplies your energies, strengthens your force and makes a god of you. It takes away all your sorrow, it takes all your anxiety and fear. You become fearless and happy".[21]

It is true that when we establish ourselves in God-consciousness, this world seems to us one of the many stages through which we are passing. "We feel", writes Dr. Radhakrishnan, "that we are strangers in the outer, visible, alien world of appearance. We do not feel at home in it. We act in it impressed by the harmony behind the flux of the world"[22]. If Rama affirms that Brahman alone is real, and that nothing exists outside It; it means that the phenomenal world, as a separate individuality is unreal so long as we fail to experience it as an expression of the Divine. The individuality which involves the assumption of a separate existence from the Absolute in which really we all live, move and have our being, is appearance, because, it has its beginning in the will to be, and will have its end when it finds the true Self in the Absolute. The very moment the finite being gives up, negates, forgets and ceases to pursue, intellectually, morally and emotionally, all that makes it finite, the vision of the Infinite dawns upon him. From the stand-point of Rama-consciousness, we are truth already, and the ocean of immortality is within us. He directs us therefore, we should not "imprison" ourselves in our "Own thought"; but that we should "wake up, wake up" and "shake off" our "sleep" and this "dream of world". So "why grovel in misery and helplessness, when there is no friend or enemy other than "own self which is all in all"? Rama emphatically declares, that, Ye are the Light of the universe, and the Lord of lords, the Holy of holies, the Highest of the high, and

"In you the highest Heaven lies,
Your mind to outer objects flies,
Turn inward, know the Self supreme,
No more shall maladies seem!"

This denial, according to Rama, means perfect realisation, rest and renunciation. It is, in the words of Wordsworth, to lay "suspended" and "asleep" in body, and become a "living soul". Thus Rama exhorts, "Let the body lie down for a while like a dead carcass" and tune your Self with the Divinity in that state of nothingness.

The consciouness of finiteness makes us ask whether or not there is anything beyond and behind the world process. Its denial is followed by a deep affirmation of the One Reality, and the poet's attempt to harmonise the ideal with life, and to elevate life to the level of the ideal. It is then, that the spiritual quest becomes, not a way out of life, but a way into life. The realms of spirit and life interpenetrate, and for Rama "life's success and spiritual success must go together" and "deluded are they who divorce one from the other". Further, the poet's consciousness of life and the tyranny of time kindles in his heart the flame of metaphysical and religious enquiry. He affirms the Reality, that is left after all negations are over. The intellectual hypothesis, as the explanation of reality, is to be materialized into the concrete reality, living and palpable. So according to Rama, intellect must be emotionalised, and emotion intellectualised. Both head and heart, together with life and body are to to be spiritualised and divinized. When all delusions of the understanding are cast away without reminder, and all appearances and names are put away; then, what remains to be affirmed is the true and essential nature of things.

For the achievement of this ideal, Rama had early planned a career of thought and action, always "pushing, marching, labour and no more stagnant indolence". Rama's romance is an adventure in consciousness, on which life always expands into the distant and dazzling Infinity. We know also that the quality of infinity is not only in magnitude of extension, but also in the "Advaitam", the mystery of unity about which the poet sings in the following melodious accents :

"Through the arched door,

Of eyebrows I pour,

And sit in the heaven of heart

There well do I ride

In glory, and guide,

And no one can leave me and part".

Rama's experience of the omnipotence of thought is not only the key to his success, but it is also capable of accomplishing the hardest task. In the words of the "Yoga-Vasishtha', "As it (mind) imagines within itself, so things happen forthwith. Whatever is intensely thought of by the mind, that comes to be materialized and effected". Rama was a staunch believer in self-effort, self-control, self-reliance and in the complete independence of man in determining his own fate, whether it be in the world or in getting rid of the world experience altogether. Man is the sole master of his fate or destiny. All that we are, all that we have, and all that we shall be, is thus the result of our thought. Our destiny is not mapped out for us by some other agency, but by our own thought. No-body can ever confer liberation as a boon on any-body. It is He, the Self of our selves who is to be obeyed and worshipped. Then is real perfection and fulfilment attained. Such is the purport of the following cryptic lines of immeasurable strength :

> "We build our future thought by thought,
> For good or bad and know it not.
> Thought is another name for fate;
> Choose then thy destiny and wait.
> Mind is the master of its sphere;
> Fear is the only thing to fear.
> Let the God in thee rise and say;
> To adverse circumstances—"Obey" !
> And thy dear wish shall have its way".

One has to make constant and earnest efforts to know by becoming; to gain the truth-vision and to radiate its force in the form of "solid Real feeling as against Flowery Talk". It is a way of life and the transformation of the finite into the infinite, the individual into the Absolute; so that not a shred of attachment clings to the soul to obstruct its free-flights. For the goal of life is freedom, and this we achieve by realizing the true source of freedom in the Self, and establishing ourselves in Its glory, we can sing like the poet :

> "Free, free is every one to me;
> No bondage, limit, fault I see,
> God, God I am and you and he" !

This is what Rama terms : "Living Realization", the "poetry of facts" that alters the colour of our consciousness with its "solid real feeling" as against "the Authority of departed authors". This change of consciousness, Rama assures us can become possible for everyone who lets the false ego merge completely in the Transcendent consciousness, to be like Rama :

> "True Brahmin, in the morning meadows wet,
> Expound the Vedas of the Violet".
> (Emerson—"Gardener")

The perpetual fact of Being and Becoming, the transit from the vast to the particular, and the perception of individual existence grounded in the universal, is a mircale for Rama. His poetry seeks to embody this magic-spell in words. He is an artist, who in his own way aims at excellence; aspires to find the "first-rate" in the objects and forms that he touches with his magic-wand of spiritual power. Any artist, whose work satisfies this craving of the human heart, and has the the capability to lift the heart of humanity above the panting cry that chokes and suffocates its vitality and freedom; is of great value and can appeal to all men of sense in every age. Such a work of art does not throw side-lights and glance at man, but shows us man in full face at his best. Here we see how wonderfully, goodness and greatness are harmonised. In the words of Plato, the man who has the power to co-ordinate goodness and greatness is an Ideal person; as he has "arrayed his soul in the jewels proper to its nature; justice, temperance, courage and truth".

The ideas presented in the poems are not cradled in the swing of optimistic and pessimistic tides, but the poet's attempt is to transcend quality and ground himself firmly in the unity in which the problems of existence and non-existence are dissolved as a salt doll in the lake. The poet's intuitive madness cannot tolerate the mere representation of the world of facts. He considers the simple photographic picture of life as a distortion of art. His excellence, and transcendence does not mean escape or annihilation. It is the perfection of the individual's spiritual, mental, vital and physical faculties, and the ultimate union of Heaven and Earth. The artist yearns to materialize and to embody his ideal in the forms and activities of life. Schelling, commenting on "The Relation of the Arts Form to Nature (1807)" said, "If we look at the mere empty shape of things and not at their essential nature, they do not speak to our hearts. We must read in them our own soul and spirit if they are to answer us". He further adds, "work which starts from mere form, however far developed from that side, betray their origin by an incurable emptiness...We must go beyond the form in order to come back to it as intelligible, alive and really felt". Further, excellence does not lie in constructing an image of man as a little crawling, sneaking spirit, mechanically determined and driven by the lower vital appetites and obscure physical instincts. Sir Richard Livingstone, in his lecture on "The Essentials of Education", rightly observed, when he said, "If I had to find the essential characteristic thing in man I should not find it, like Marx, in the economic animal—or, like Freud and many modern novelists, in sex-ridden phantom". Marxist sociology does not understand that "men shall not live by bread alone", and that economic stability is the first step to the excellence that lies in the progressive unfolding of life's immeasurable potentialities. While Freudian psychology mixes up facts with interpretation, and does not understand that, the satisfaction of the "kama", the sex urge, "Artha", economic prosperity, and Moksha or liberation, the aims of human life, are but the off-shoots of Dharma or Law. Dharma or Truth itself, originates from the Supreme Being. Rama's art, soaked in this perception, has cast away all that is fragmentary and has become pure, will-less, painless and timeless entity. "It is at this very stage", wrote Hegel in his "Aesthetics", "that art transcends itself", and according to Rama, the wick and oil must be consumed for the light to shine, and the artist must die for his art. "To detach", Tagore says, "the individual idea from its confinement of everyday facts and to give it soaring wings, the freedom of the universal; this is the function of poetry". This is what Rama's muse is aiming at. He, with his wings of knowledge and Renunciation, soared to the regions of the Golden Purusha of the Upanishads to fill up cup of his heart with joy and came down to inform us that :

"These forms of space and time,
Are garments fine and covers rich,
which half reveal,
And half-conceal, that glorious love of mine".

The poetry of Rama is, as Matthew Arnold said about true poetry, conceived of and composed in his soul. "The vates, whether prophet or poet", as Carlyle says in The Hero as Poet, "has penetrated into it, is a man sent hither to make it more impressively known to us".[22] Like true

Romantics, Rama kept on treading the path that leads one to Divinity. By leading the romantic life of Rama one is certain to get "sylvan strength", and to become gradually a united man. Such a man is not determined by circumstances, but leads them. Rama's romance (as we have already said) is an adventure in consciousness. He is not an idealist, in the sense Berkeley or Shelley are, but a realist who perceives the same truth in the object as well as in the subject. Moreover, for him every theory must carry conviction by its practical applicability to life. For him, as Matthiessen says about Emerson, "Philosophy is neither a science of reason or understanding only, nor merely a science of morals, but the science of Being altogether, its primary ground can be neither merely speculative, nor merely practical, but both in one".[23] Rama considers religion as the fruit of philosophy. For him "Brahma Vidya", metaphysical knowledge is a rational approach to reality, founded on "Yoga-shastra" and ethical disciplines. Both together translate knowledge into concrete experience.

The romance of Rama like Emerson, Wordsworth and Thoreau is not a mere sentimentalism that is irrational and abnormal. It is not remote from social reality, and the poet is never lost in improbable adventures. Rama's romance is improbable only to the pragmatic sense and understanding that believes in physical dimensions only. While, on the other hand it becomes quite possible to the Imagination which risks the "non-self" in the mental adventure that bridges the gap of divided consciousness. In poetry of Rama there is the romantic note of individualism that every romantic poet has expressed with lesser or greater force. In Rama, like Emerson, it is the ringing note of self-reliance, the problem of the self, the mysterious romance of "what am I", the riddle of the Sphinx, that every romantic has to resolve if he wants to enter into the transcendental realms. Emerson sees man "very near to greatness", and feels that "one step" of self-realization is enough to bring us perfection, after which, "we are safe". Rama on the other hand sees man a "marching Light", who has the capacity to "take the leap" and challenge the universe with its threatening elemental voice ;

"I come, O you ocean !
Divide up and part,
Or parched up and scorched up,
Be dried up, depart".

And further his volcanic cry rises higher like a gale :

"Go howl on O winds,
O my Dogs ! howl free.
Beat, beat, storms,
O my Bugles ! blow free".

Like all genuine romantic poets, Rama sincerely longs to fathom the mystery of Life and Nature, Soul and God. He is keen to chalk out the role of man in building up the society of universal brotherhood. He is bent upon living more deeply, more fully, more richly and with greater awareness. In his search he goes away from the beaten track, but upholds the romantic strain and the inner, subjective and inspirationalist trends of Tagore, Whitman, Carpenter, Yeats, A. E. and others. His classical gravity keeps his romance sane and healthy and it is meant for those moral giants who, like himself have cultivated a love for spiritual values, and who strive for the realization that brings strength, love, power, beauty, wisdom and peace. We are liable to mistake his romance as misty and impracticable, until we ourselves acquire the spiritual mood proper for grasping the poet's heightened state of experience. Rama's romance is saved from sentimentalism, the outpourings of the sickness of the soul and from the morbidness of the mind. His romance is remote from the wilderness in which Keats' Knight is "palely-loitering" with no birds to cheer his sorrow-stricken heart. Nor is it like Shelley's romance that swings from Godwin to Platonic ideas, from body to spirit, and from state to individual. The terseness of the conflict compels Shelley to weep like a tired child and to become Alastor and sever the lost ties with reality. Nor does Rama's romance abate in its intensity as that of Wordsworth, who ultimately takes recourse to orthodoxy; nor does is resemble

Coleridge's supernaturalism that ends in his fall from the heights and his inability to retain the rapture of the transcendental vision. In spite of all the differences, Rama still shares certain principles with these romantic poets, but unlike them he possesses the unmixed and unabated youth, freshness and strength of the waters of his beloved Ganga.

The character of Rama is like fragrance to the rose. It has depth of spiritual intensity, the bubbling joy of divine madness, moral power and a great insight into religious truth. These we do not find to such a degree in the character or works of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Emerson. Rama's romantic vision, as compared to the vision of these poets, surpasses them in its philosophical depth and in its buoyant and healthy optimism. His ecstatic vision sees evil as an evaporating vapour that, like clouds, melts, before his solar eyes. This enables him to assert the inherent goodness of man. If God is within, how can soul's nature be sinful. Man is patentially divine, that is why in Rama's philosophy one perceives the veil of ignorance that gives no chance of permanent settlement to sin. Further, he could give a death-blow to the concept of the inherent depravity of man on the basis of his personal experience that the soul is pure and free. In addition to this, there is no brooding melancholy in Rama's vision. He could not say like Emerson, that "the way of providence is little rude", and we are forced to "obey our polarity". Though many times in his life, tragic clouds visited him, and he suffered the pangs of extreme poverty and want; yet he is a typical romanticist who drinks up all differences and swallows up death. He hitches to his "chariot" the "Fates and the gods", and invites "with Thunder of cannons" all the adverse forces of Nature to try their power on him :

"O suns and storms, earth-quakes, wars,
    Hail, welcome, come, try all your force on Me !
Ye nice torpedoes fire ! My playthings, crack !
    O Shooting stars, My arrows, fly !
You burning fire ! can you consume ?
    O threatening one you flame from Me" !

Rama shares the concept of romantic philosophy with the great idealists and poets, but his application of these concepts and principles is uniquely his own, in that it makes him deviate from them at a certain stage of realization. It makes him different not only from the English Romantic poets, but from the Americans too. It is because he has launched his life's ship "out on trackless seas", and is determined to rise above individual, environmental and universal consciousness, and embrace "the flameless light" of transcendence Supreme. In his madness for the Ideal, he is prepared to "risk his life and in order to reach where no "mariner has yet dared to go". So he is :

> "Fearless for unknown shores,
> On the waves of ecstasy to sail" ?

In this romantic quest, the individual ever aspires, ever rejects whatever obstructs his union with the Divine. The triple process of aspiration, rejection, or negation and opening to the divine are miracles of psychological attitudes that bring about a most surprising and delightful change in our constitution and consciousness. Rejection is not suppression or repression, because boxed up passions if thwarted may have an outlet other than the normal one. Negation or rejection is really an inner separation, self-dissociation that brings freedom and positive affirmation of That which remains after the process of "neti neti". It makes oneself open to the higher, to the Divine and creates order out of airy nothings.

In this manner, Rama elevates poetry till it becomes the greatest force of purification, sublimation and katharsis. The "function of art", writes Dr. Radhakrishnan, "is purging of emotions, a setting aside of all selfish considerations...... Literary artists, who are emanicipated in their minds and hearts, are the spokesmen of the unborn world unity, based not on fear, greed and hate, but on that which is eternal in man, the spirit that hungers and thirsts after righteousness, the spirit that will not be denied[25]. For Rama, poetry has a mission, and the phrase "Art for Art's sake" may mean anything. When insight into truth is gained, passions are subdued, and ill-will subsides, the divine's sparks in us are released and become a fire that cleanses the earth. Then poetry performs the function of, not only, pleasing, touching and moving, but of inspiring, invigorating and elevating. For Rama, truth is indeed beauty, but beauty to him is not the beauty that captivates the eye or the mere aesthetic sense.

Art no doubt gives order to our experience, but this order is brought out of the chaos and disorder to which the artist exposes us By negation, he breaks the prevailing order of superficial values. To him absolute order, based on scientific and philosophical materialism, is an empty category, a sleight of logic, as incomprehensible as absolute chaos. In the words of Jesse Roarke, "ones normal orientations must be broken, because they are not sufficient : there is no 'normal' humanity, and if there were, the story of humanity, as an illusory race would be concluded. One must continually break one's constructions, or be stifled by them".[26] According to Rama, we must break through the cocoons of our desires, and dehypnotise ourselves if we are to reach the goal of evolution. Negation and affirmation and disintegration and reintegration are interrecting and interdependent pairs of opposites, and neither is meaningful without the other. Denial must be followed by positive assertion of the Real, and an unfolding of the potentialities that are latent in man. Disintegration and integration work simultaneously. Keeping them in proper balance the poet tries to further the growth of evolution. If man cannot go beyond practical considerations, his survival itself is relatively shortlived. The environment cannot be ultimately the controlling factor, provided man is able to look life in the face and from the soul's inner strength. Then only he can sing :

"Life or death, and health or disease,
In me like vapours rise, play and cease.
The straight line of youth, and the curves of age,
Are surface figures on me as a page.
Success or failure makes no difference to me".

To see history as a meaningful process one has to deny the adequacy of the materialistic view on certain ground and assert the freedom of man as the make of his own destiny, who has the power to determine the means and alter the conditions of society.

Rama wanted to create a new social order that would take into account the spiritual direction of our life. It is not an Utopian ideal, or an abstract conception isolated from concrete existence. It can be achieved when our unhappy hates are extinct, when there is an end to our narrow egoism, greed, anger and all the appetites and passions which keep the individual locked up inside his mortal self, cooled down and channelised. Rama promises that, he is "determined to thunder out in your bosom his God-head and proclaim it through every deed and movement". Only if we are ready to "fling aside Brahmanhood, burn up swamiship, throw overbroad the alienating titles and honours", and understand that we are above caste, creed, class and clan. Our true "deed" lies in our feeling one with the learned or ignorant, rich or poor, Hindu or Muslim, Christian or Jew and saint or sinner. According to the poet, we are all "heirs of joy", the children of immortal bliss, and equally share "love and woe". Any man following a particular religious creed cannot consider himself higher than the one who does not follow that dogma. The joys of Nature are equally bestowed on all. This is what the poet means when he sings :

"What care I for caste or creed ?
It is the deed, it is the Deed.
What for class, or what for clan ?
It is the Man, it is the Man.
Heirs of love, and joy and woe
Who is high and who is low ?
Mountain, Valley, Sky and sea,
Are for all humanity".

Poet values Man, and wants to enhance his prestige. It is because man carries within him the divine spark and his heart is the Temple of God. It is our "faith" and our intense "struggle up the slope" that will open the golden gates of this temple where shines the "soul" of man in all its resplendent glory. There is only one God, like the sun, that is reflected in the myriad forms of humanity. So the poet is right in declaring :

"What care I for robe or stoll ?
Ir is the Soul, it is the Soul.
What for crown, or what for crest ?
It is the heart within the breast.
It is the Faith, it is the Hope,
It is the struggle up the slope,
It is the brain and the eye to see,
One God and one Humanity".

True religion does not lie in books, temples, dogmas, rituals or in forms and creeds. To the poet, belief and conduct, rites and ceremonies, dogmas and authorities are subordinate to the art of self-discovery and contact with the Divine. True religion for Rama, is to change our nature, to transform our personality and become different from what we seem. This is what his poetry is attempting to do. He tells us that religion is meant to bind our consciousness back to the fountain source of all knowledge and power. In this attempt, he assures us that there is no worry and fear. It is on the other hand our wrong thinking that binds us and does not allow us to see what we are in reality. It is better for us to pay heed to the poet's valuable words :

"...............See what you are,

There is nothing to lose or fear for,

No harm to thee can ever accrue,

Thy thought alone doth thee pursue".

Another discipline, that perfects the twin psychological processes of negation and affirmation, is the company of Nature. Here Rama shares with the Romantic poets his susceptibility to the wild grandeur of Nature and he understands that, for mystic vision it is very essential to silence the mind in solitude. In communion with Nature, he again wants to wake up those ancient notes or songs that had their birth in mountain caves and glades of the forest deep. He goes to Nature like a student going to the university, for a period, to cultivate his mind and chisel his character into the form of beauty. In the cool flowery lap of earth his mind got an original rise and the poet began to warble in musical accents like his beloved Nightingale. This leads us to his Gospel of Nature, which shall be our subject of study in the next chapter. Suffice it to say that the love of Nature was a strong passion, a keen appetite, which he could not resist. In the inaccessible snowy regions of the Himalayas he spent his years of life, seeing like Wordsworth, the inner world in beauty exalted :

"Worshipping then among the depths of things,
As piety ordained...........
I felt, observed and pondered".

(The Prelude)

He saw the mysterious web of Nature woven with the threads of various colours like the colourful lights of hidden "chakras" in the subtle body of man. The play of colour in Nature was for him the highest form of speech that was employed in order to reflect His glory and joy :

"O colour, colour, love's last opulence !
Thy universal language doth enshrine,
The mystery of all magnificence,
A supernatural ministry is thine,
These largest forms of speech doth God employ,
To shadow forth His own unshadowed joy".

In the play of light and shade he saw the game of hide and seek that the Supreme plays with the beloved jiva. By hidding Himself in the forms of Nature he enhances His mystery and romance. However, Rama does not run outwards, after the changing form and figures in quest of his love. He knows the Nature of forms and sings :

> "The sky, the breeze, the river, rose,
> Such veils of gauze, for Self He chose.
> Hide as Thou mayest, I feel Thee.
> The forms are chased by one another,
> That we may see the One they cover".

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2

The Gospel of Nature

Rama like the earlier poet-seers of the Upanishads had felt the medicinal, intellectual and spiritual value of a forest hermitage, and the importance of living in the solitude of Nature. Mother Nature, whose mystery Emily Dickenson compares with a well, always invited all genuine lovers to :

> "Come forth and bring with you a heart,
> That watches and receives".
>
> (Wordsworth)

Her suggestions are like the riddles of the Sphinx. Her secrets are unveiled by the poet who comes, not to dominate and exploit her, but who yearns to make her his own in love's delight. It is a task light and easy for him who is not after the phenomenal knowledge of forms and facts, but who desires to enter into their spirit through training and self-control in the university of Nature. When, with this motive in mind, the poet goes to Nature and spends some days and months in her lap, we do not call it laziness and a wastage of time. Solitude is embraced for contemplation, reflection, study and self-control. The poet's life has a purpose which does not lie in what man is externally, but what he inwardly can become. When a man of superconscious realization sits lazily "stretched beneath the cedars and pines", resting carelessly, doing nothing, without any worry and thought of tomorrow, but simply drinking fresh air with his whole heart, kissing the glorious light with the fulness of joy, singing Om and letting the murmurring stream keep time, we do not condemn him for his inactiveness. We do not condemn him for his inactiveness. We feel great power of action in his serene passiveness. If some "upstart of civilization" comes and questions.

"Why do you import Asiatic laziness into America. Go out and do some good", Plato's advice would not be altogether impertinent. "My lad", says Plato in 'Laws', "you are still young and time as it advances will lead you to a complete reversal of many of your present convictions. You should wait for the future, when, before you understand to judge of the supreme issues..." These upstarts cannot comprehend that behind this "oriental laziness" is a dynamic realization that works miracles and emits words of great and the illuminating smiles that rend the veils of darkness.

"Retiring to the forest", Rama says, "is simply a means to an end; it is like going to the university". We cannot reform others, nor bring any creative revolution in society, unless each individual determines to reform himself and attains "victory over the local self", and possesses the "youth of divine joy". It is here that the guiding or shaping power of Nature becomes an imperative need in the progress of life. We have to imbibe the lessons of Nature, follow her rhythmic movements, and understand that her purpose is the same as ours. To acquire proper knowledge and to strengthen our will-power, we may retire into the forest for a while, but, "Vedanta philosophy", according to Rama, "never teaches that retiring into the forest is renunciation",[1] and a false craze for doing good a "profession" that is "already choked and over-crowded". Who are we to do good to humanity when the Saviour Himself is already working through Nature, and directing her evolution to perfection ? Why not to realize God in the temple of Nature ? Is not the realization of God the highest service to mankind ? According to Rama "laziness" is to keep oneself "floundering in the quagmire of conventionality and to let oneself flow down the current of custom and fashion and sink like a dead weight in the well of appearances and be caught in the pond of possession and spend the time which should be God's, in making gold and call it "doing good"[2]. The present cut-throat competition, haste, restlessness and thirst after wealth cannot bring any lasting happiness. The wealth which is taken by force out of the hands of the more needy, and goes to swell the pockets of rich millionaires by organised craft is a source of sin that brings death. Such wealth destroys their health and happiness with the sickening dinners of hotels and taverns, furnishing them with pallid countenances and conventional looks. They imprison themselves in boxes called rooms, "choked with the stink of artificiality", and are excited by all sorts of unnatural physical and mental stimulants. This confusion of "getting and spending" of the so-called guardians of civilization, according to the poet is a "fuss for mere Self-delusion". By indulging in false pleasures and pursuing the shadows of desires, they lose their hold on the real joy that Nature invites them to enjoy with hearts that can "watch", "receive", "knock" and "pray".

The civilized men hide-bound living in caste, in close drawing rooms arrogate to themselves the airs of superiority, prestige, respectability and honour. In this manner they banish themselves from the wide world, separate themselves from fellow-beings and exile themselves from fresh fragrant natural life. They, in their ignorance may laugh at the child-like trust of Wordsworth in the guiding power of Nature who overtly proclaimed :

"Nature never did betray

The heart that loved her."

Rama, too like Wordsworth, exhorts us not to seek excuses for existence "in the rush and push about dainty trifles", because there is no enjoyment in running after enjoyment. Rama calls such people "dear dupes of opinions" who postpone their enjoyment, and do not find time to stand and stare and sit down on the banks of a beautiful mountain stream and enjoy the company of their blood-relations—free air, silvery light, playful water and green earth. In the words of Wordsworth :

"The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.
Little we see in Nature that is ours,
We have given our hearts away a sordid boon."

Mother Nature has been the cradle of all men of imagination, and it has prepared them for the sublime vision of life and soul. Lovers of Nature, are like the mystics who express the same language of feeling and recognize the same principles. In America, Cooper, Bryant, John Muir, Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman sought inspiration in Nature, and imbibed in their lives and works something of her freshness and vigour. Cooper, like the early landscape painters saw Nature, not as God, but as the handiwork of the "Almighty creator", or a book of wonderful pictures which were difficult to understand. A touch of the same mystery in Nature is felt by Bryant, who conceived her as a profoundly moving symbol of God, speaking to the poetic heart in various languages. John Muir's prevailing attitude is one of wonder, that of a true poet naturalist who regards Nature as the unspeakably beautiful work of the loving creator; as the temple of God in which man can worship. Rama, like Emerson, and these poets shares the feeling of love, wonder and reverence towards Nature; however his love and concept of Nature transcends and differs from all these poets. Though he has some kinship to Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman, yet with his "giant strength", he rises above all the personalities and asserts :

"Sweet streams and rivers my veins and arteries,
My beauteous hair the fresh green trees.
What a giant strength ! My bones are mountains."

Rama was a poet-recluse in the mountains, clad in nothing but a loin-cloth and a blanket. He possessed the strength to swim across mountain-torrents in the rainy season to climb over Himalayan cliffs and over the freezing snows—barefooted and bare-headed—with a speed at which professed mountaineers were astounded. Rama had in him this romantic madness, this love of awful Nature and a strength of will that enabled him to win a forty-mile race with the American soldiers by nearly two hours. He was truly Shelley's Alastor, a "youth of uncorrupted feeling and adventurous genius, led by an imagination, inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe". Sun, wind and rain served but to enhance the freshness of his figure, and the tigers and other wild animals he met in his rambles, were made quiet as lambs by his bold and loving looks. He could walk more than forty miles a day as a Swami in the Himalayan hills, and still remained "insatiate"; because, as in the words of Shelley, he thirsted "for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself". He scaled Gangotri, Jumnotri, Badrinath and Amarnath peaks, and crossed from Jumnotri to Gangotri through glaciers. The description of this journey to Gangotri is beautifully presented by Rama himself in the following words of great lyrical charm. The words are worth quoting for their poetic beauty and wild romantic grandeur :

> Rama is going with only one cotton sheet round his waist and singing "OM". At a place, for about nine or ten miles, there is a range of parallel mountains, like high walls on both sides. In between these mountainous walls, the Ganga is flowing deep below, touching the mountains. On one side is a narrow bridge path on a steep mountain on which Rama is passing all alone. It would be about two or three in the night, with absolute loneliness. There is not even a bird to disturb. The clouds are overcast and there are flashes of lightening. Rama has not even an umbrella to cover his head. He is bare-footed with not even a stick to give him any support.... This is a place through which human beings hardly ever pass even during the broad day light. He is now climbing, holding the thorny bushes and the pointed rocks. Rama is present at the mountain tops, where even the goats can hardly reach :
>
> "I have reached the stage of Realization.
>
> I have torn open three thousand curtains

And how I have discovered that I am
The fruit of Reality and the garden of God's
Eternal Bliss."[3]

At the top of the mountain he sings the thrilling sound of OM, OM, OM; and knowing its efficacy and power to inspire in him the poems that burn with thoughts, and are smelt in the furnace of the heart's interior sphere. He asks the "late risers" to open their eyes, hear the resonance of OM, and try to visualise how his poems are the emanating vibrations of this Mantra. In this spell of divine intoxication, Rama orders the clouds to go and proclaim the efficacy of OM, and "O lightning! make haste and write in letters of flash light, OM, OM, OM."[4]

Rama lived in the snows and slept in caves, in the thick of dreary jungles, all alone. The mountain people believed him to be a Deva, so strong, that he could ferry their cattle from the opposite bank to this side of their village across a swift hill torrent in the rainy season. At midnight, he would leave his Asana and go roaming in the dark jungles, defying death and fear and singing songs of such glee :

"I chase as an huntsman,
I eat as I seize,
The hearts of the mountains,
The lands and the seas."

With all his exuberance of physical and spiritual energy, Rama presented to the world a daring romantic love of Nature, that is in no way extravagant, remote and sentimental. He did not live in the ivory-towers of imagination, and like Yeats create a fanciful image of the 'Lake Isle of Innsfree' to console himself, and find an artificial escape from the humdrum life of the world. His personality was explosive. "He would remain silent for months together as if he had nothing to say. He remained merged in joy. All of a sudden, he would burst out like a volcano and give out his thought in a wild manner."[5] His style of singing was original and refreshing and mingled with an awful grandeur, as for example his following invitation to :

"O suns and storms, O earthquakes, wars,
Hail, welcome ! come, try all your force on Me !
Ye nice tarpedoes, fire ! My playthings, crack !
O shooting star, My arrows, fly !
You burning fire can you consume."

Rama tells us that Nature teaches one to overcome all hardships and obstructions if one is keen to have a peep into her mysteries and be one with her. "All obstructions" in the words of Rama, "must disappear before a strong adamantine will". Rama, by dint of hard labour and ceaseless longing, crossed the obstructions of narrow domestic walls, and rose above such religion as is sectarian and sucks the sap of life. He preferred the temple of Nature that no mortal hands have built, whose lamps are the sun, moon and stars, while the immensity and mystery of the blue-deep—unfathomable to many—was part of Rama's daily spiritual sport. David Vedder in his poem 'The Temple of Nature', seeks to present a glimpse of the temple in whose unbounded ethereal walls the poets often delight :

"Talk not of temples, there is one,
Built without hands to mankind given;
Its lamps are the meridian sun,
All the stars of heaven.
Its walls are the cerulean sky
Its floor the earth so green and fair,
The dome its vast immensity,
All nature worships there."

Such was the Temple that Rama sought. Here he gathered various experiences of delight, love and knowledge, and also made the discovery of the lost soul of India. He found that cheerful atmosphere, fair landscapes and fairy scenes often go a great way in "giving to the mind its first rise", and "elevate it in the primary stages".[6] Near dawn, the most fascinating and beautiful colours, seen in the Eastern horizon, give the mind a direct lift and impart it the elementary exaltation. The orange, purple, violet and pink colours and their indescribable varieties charm our eyes and put our minds in the best mood for thinking and becoming a receiver of sublime thoughts. From the spiritual point of view, Rama believes that if a man develops the capacity of walking alone in Nature, the mind will automatically shake off the dividing forces and its discordant elements and find its centre. "Imagination" says Rama, "is the relaxation of the soul". It finds its wings in the company of Nature, and generates the force to create such forms that radiate the bliss of immortality. Rama asks us to walk towards the setting or the rising sun, to walk on the banks of rivers and where the cool breeze is playing. This is the best medicine for the health; your whole system is invigorated and you are put in harmony with the universe. Often walking all alone, for miles over the snows, Rama used to sit on a snowy mound and feast on the beauty of Nature. He felt himself wrapped in peace that can never be found in the fumes and furies of the multitudes and the noises and turmoils of the world. In such a blessed and serene mood, no sound of any kind disturbed him. Transcendent enchantment and fascination drowned his mind in "ananda-ghanghor". The pulses of fragrance, that came and went on the airy undulations, affected Rama like sweet music, and he enjoyed beauty breaking forth everywhere. Rama has given beautiful description of his walks through Nature in a poetic and charming manner. In his descriptions he personifies the forms of Nature and alters the whole scene with the colour of his consciousness. During his visit to Kashmir he playfully squats on the top of a hill near Kukarnag; finding himself all of a sudden surrounded by the stretches of green fields, one above the other. His poetic eyes visualize these green fields as the chairs spread in a lecture theatre. He gets the vision of gods like Pavan, Varun and Aditi taking their seats on them, while Rama sees himself the Emperor occupying the Darbar and commanding their hearing. Down below lie spread the carpets of green, red and yellow colours, and among them the rivulets gracefully dance with sweet music. These streams seem to Rama, like beautiful girls attracting his attention. All around, stately vistas and charming flowerage beguile his hard journey on his way to the Amarnath cave on a moonlight night. He caught in the glimmering and shimmering moonlight a phenomena of mystery and Magic while the moon swimmed "in the lake of the skies". Rama must have asked her :

> "Who lent you this beauty, O Silver Ball ?
>
> My dream is her lustre and silver and all."

In "the whistling loom of time", Rama weaved his life's poem with image and metaphors from Nature that are as old as creation itself, but nothing could circumscribe his poetic sentiment of deeper and diverse possibilities. He was not like Poe a "way-worn wanderer" caught in his juke-box of mingled emotions of gloom and fear. Nothing could mar the joy that he pressed out of the phenomenal changes of Nature and life. He was an eternal pilgrim whom no lightning, tempest wins and whom the greatest sufferings of life could not obstruct in his journey towards the ultimate destination. These were rather messengers sent by Love to elevate the poet to the superconscious level. He was among those ancient "sannyasins frank and bold". free from any taint of polarity, who truly "are Nature's priests in the temples old". These "priests" are not cowed down by any calamity of Nature. They do not find in her any "crack", and fear of wild animals is a sin which they do not commit. They have made complete surrender of their body, life and mind to the inner Self that is also the Self of Nature, and her external rapture :

> "...is naught but the bloom of my love,
>
> And the waters run down in the tune I dream.
>
> The sun is my flower uphung above."

Lovers of Nature with their diverse approaches seek the unchanging reality in Nature that lies beneath her many apparent realities, and which remains always a mystery, sweet and awful, transcending Nature herself. The poet-seers have always longed to unveil this mystery or presence, but with their diverse approaches of understanding they have only presented faint glimpse of the deep meaning that hovers over every form. They try to mystify Nature by knitting around her a web of cryptic images that lull us into the world of abstraction and uncertainty. In Rama, there is no such uncertainty or obscurity to drag us into the antithesis of the observed and the thing observed. The veil of obscurity drops when duality is lost in the sea of consciousness, and the poet identifies himself totally with creation itself. This is the knowledge through identity, that perceives the Self in everything and everything rooted in the Self. The panorama of Nature changes, the universe becomes an idea dancing around him and all is—I and Bliss. In such rapturous experience there is nothing to worry, fear or desire about. He has nothing to crave and ask in his helplessness like Shelley, who entreats the "Mother of this unfathomable world", to :

"Favour my solemn song, for I have loved,
Thee ever, and thee only; I have watched
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
And my heart ever gazes on the depth
Of thy deep mysteries...."

There is a touch of pain, dejection and deep craving in the words of Shelley, but on the pedestal of Rama-consciousness this pain and helplessness is womanish. Rama would have laughed at the loss of a thing whose search must be made within. Our useless wrangling in outward Nature in search of that which is one's own, results in infatuation. When the poet perceives Nature and Self as one, like a dream and the objects of dream, then how can he blame others for the loss; because, as he sings :

"I hitch to my chariot
The Fates and Gods,

And :

The heavens and stars,
Worlds, near and far,
Are hung and strung,
On the tunes I sung."

Like Shelley, Rama finds earth, ocean and air a family of "beloved brotherhood" and feels his blood running in the veins of a Lily. Rama is not only "in the form of ladies and gentlemen'', but his brothers and sisters are all around :

"In the air and on the ground,
And they are the same as I."

Shelley saw in Nature the presence of a "wild spirit" moving everywhere as the "Destroyer and Preserver", and with whom he had a faint identity when he was young—then he could move heaven and earth. In spite of all his enthusiasm Shelley could not see in the wild spirit, his own Self or Atma, that could not utter such cries of despair, "I fall on thorns of life, I bleed". Though Rama suffered severely than Shelley, yet he did not cry helplessly, as he thought it a sin to be weak and miserable. In the midst of want and poverty Rama heroically upheld his experience that :

"In you the highest Heaven lies,
Your mind to outer objects flies.
Turn inward, know the self supreme,
No more shall maladies seem."

It is this height of realization that fills Rama with madness divine. It makes him fling aside all conventions and ambitions and roam through the trackless paths of Nature; resting under the roof of sky, sleeping on the bed of green earth and eating what chance may bring. This is how the poet losses his self in order to rediscover the glory of the ancient Self. In the words of Tagore, poets "are the true Renouncers, because change is our very secret. We lose, in order to find. We have no faith in the never changing. Our words do not speak, they sing." Rama knew that "the secret of detachment", is the source of true joy. In joy, Rama experienced how the poets warble the lyrics of the sky, the earth and the dawn. They have the power to communicate the deep peace of the sky that they themselves enjoy and express "what a tree feels when it holds out its leaves like cups to be filled with the sun-shine". Rama, too, enjoyed the rapture of the pathless woods, felt the significance of the "smiles of rose", and "the pearls of dew", and understood Nature's, "various language". And like Bryant :

> "To him who in the love of Nature hold communion,
> With her visible form, she speaks,
> A various language."
>
> (Thanatopsis)

Rama knew what sort of lessons the forms of Nature taught. To him every bird and flower gave sublime hints of mystic moods. Once, Rama in a frolicsome mood, perhaps sitting in a snug cottage in the mountain amphitheatre, asked a "merry bird" to tell him the secret of its happiness; how he is able to keep up such simplicity, and remains untouched by this "dim vast vale of tears" where even to think is full of sorrow ? The bird "cooed softly" and "whispered low" the cause of his gladness. Unlike our vain struggle to contend with obstructions and our striving to penetrate and transform the evil of the world by our artificial means. The bird's message, whose language the poets spell with their occult vision, is a call to dehypnotise ourselves into the Light of lights by casting of all jealousy and selfishness and seeing this world in the "spirit of love". With this spirit of love the universe is unfolded before us in a panorama and we perceive Nature "laughing around and about". The bird's message is that men should become natural, decorate themselves with natural smiles and give up their exploitation of Nature which they have created by raising the selfish walls of separate Nations on this lovely earth. It is due to their thick ignorance that they do not know that :

"The mountain, valley, sky and sea,
Are for all humanity."

According to the poet, it is a futile attempt to create the divisions of Hindu-Muslim, Christian-Jew, rich and poor and inferior and superior. By arrogating the airs of superiority and fighting for our selfish rights and private possessions, we weave the web of false relationships, and in the eyes of Nature commit the sin of ignorance. We can be free and glad like a bird, if we partake in the play of existence. Then only we can warble in divine accents, and claim like the bird with all confidence in the joy of unity :

"So why should I be sorry and pout,
When Nature is laughing around and about ?
And is ready and willing to truly serve me
With everything that is necessary !
If only I merrily sing and chirp,
And go happily, happily to work;
For Nature and I are one, you see,
And she is always subservient to me."

The poet, like a bird, is a lover of Nature, therefore, he is both her slave and her master. He comes to her like a child to be lulled in the cradle of peace and joy. Every form throbs with life, and the poet only silently reads the meaning. His art "consists of making every little bit of experience an occasion for a leap into the Infinite." In the flowers, even, he gets a clue to Self-knowledge, and asks :

"Dear little violet, with thy dewy eye,
Look up and tell me truly,
When no one is nigh,
What art thou ?"

Rama felt everything to be a unit of consciousness-force, and nothing was dead and inanimate for him. He addressed his pens, saws, pencils and knives as human beings and fondled them with affection. It is therefore no surprise that flowers, birds, stars and moon heaved their hearts to him, like this little violet that answered him with a "gentle sigh" :

"If that is to be told when alone,
Then I must sadly own,
It will never be known,
What am I;
For my brothers and sisters are all around,
In the air and on the ground,
And they are the same as I."

The images of birds, like flowers, sun, stars, trees, streams, mountains and zephyrs are knit in the garland of this poetry. The bird's sound had a sublime effect on him; it enlivened his solitude and made a world enough for him. In fact, his poetry could not live without the songs of the lover Nightingale and the smiles of the beloved Rose. Birds taught him the secret of inspiration and the art of spontaneous singing; the musical movement welling out of the depths of the heart as fresh and original as running brooks in the forest glades. Inspiration, as a spontaneous expression of joy in words or colours, could not be brought about—according to Rama, "by taking hold of the throat of the nightingale and saying, 'come down here nightingale or dove and sing' ".[7] The moment the nightingale or dove is free from all norms and conventions and perches on the top of a tree, like the poet who perches on the summit of the beautiful Pines and Cedars of his divine nature, that very moment, the nightingale and the dove coo, and from the poet :

"Intoxicating melodies
On winds of heavenly zephyrs blow."

The poet, like a "bird in the dawn", rests peaceful calm "on the world's troubled stormy sea", and words come out of him as fragrance emanates from the rose. To the poet-sannyasins, birds are always the symbol of awakened psychic consciousness, who with their wings of knowledge and renunciation, scale the heights of the ever-widening sea of consciousness. The birds are Nature's musicians, who, to Rama, "send currents of songs flowing free", and teach the old lessons in fresh rhythms of every day life. Rama, himself a bird of passage, lights for a while upon the twig of this unstable world swinging in polar rhythms. The poet, like the bird, knows the nature of this twig that bends, but he sings on, unfrightened, trusting to his wings. According to Rama, "The twig swings up and down" yet the bird "is not frightened; for even though he is sitting on the twig, he is on his wings. The bird knows that he is trusting, not in the twig, but in his own wings."[8] Such is the life of the awakened consciousness. The poet's heart is not tied to the fleeting achievements of the world, nor are his joy and knowledge due to the grace of the world. For, as he says, "success or failure makes no difference to me", because he is free Swan who "leaves far behind" all planets, suns, stars and sings the "songs of glee". He is untouched by the painful and pleasing emotions of "Life or death; health and disease", because in the presence of his sublime realisation these like "vapours rise, play and cease".

The flower is another important image of great beauty and significance in Rama's poetry. One has to become candid, innocent and detached like a flower before one is allowed to enter the inner halls of Nature's mystery. The smiles of the rose and pearls of dew are, for the poets, living realities. They present such glimpses to the star-lit eyes of the poet that are "too often deep for tears". Even "the meanest flower that blows" takes the poet "far off into the spiritual atmosphere" where "the body is laid asleep" and the poet "becomes a living soul' whose dwelling is in the light of the setting sun, round ocean and in the mind of man. Thus every flower is a shivering delight, an incarnate spirit that "breathes" the joy of the spirit as an expression of oneness with Nature. "This is my faith", Wordsworth says :

"...that every flower,
Enjoys the air it breathes."

To Rama, the flower is the bloom of his love. His "beloved wild rose" turns red like fire at the sight of Ram-Badshah, "the Lord of the Universe" and he inhales like Shelley :

"...the light and smell divine,
Of all flowers that breathe and shine."

The flowers nodded and smiled at him "with glee". Their "glistening" opened the power of his "inward listening", thus enabling him to give vent to the poems that hang on the bushes and trees, to the verses that are murmured by the rills and streams, and the songs which echo from awakened nests. He fed his heart and mind with these truth-vibrations, and nursed their love as a movement of his Spirit's power. To him the sweet children of "my sun" are these :

"Violets, Roses, Tulpis, Lilies,
Jessamine, Poppies, Daisies and Pinks,
Grass, Leaves and seeds I nurse and feed."

Rama's personality itself, his deeds, smiles and character emitted the sweet perfume of wild roses and flowers. His very presence charmed the atmosphere, because :

"The sweet perfume of the fragrant lily,
Is my Rama's love deeds."

The touch of soft zephyrs, wooing him gently awakened in Rama glimpses of his real nature so much so that he identified himself with it, and saw himself like the zephyrs playing freely all around, kissing all, wafting odour which is soft and "sweet as the smiles when fond lovers meet, and soft as their parting tears".[9] This communion brings a sudden moment of union, when Rama finds himself decorated in "white robes of light, bright rays of gold", he immediately gives himself up to the arms of his Lover with an inextinguishable laughter and silence. In the depth of silence he achieved the culminating glory of his spiritual sadhna. Rama visualizes, "the earth revolves upon her axis to lay open before Me all her sides, the universe, does all sorts of things for Me. The sun sheds lustre for My sake, the moon shines for My sake, before Me."

The sun is another sublime and cardinal image in Rama's poetic-landscape. The mystic beams of the sun that are glorified in his poems, show that Rama was the poet of the Super-solar blaze treading the path of light, power and knowledge. The sun is a symbol of the true yogi who has no selfishness and no desire for self-aggrandizement. The "sun's bright rays embalmed in sweetness" enraptured his senses so much so, that he always called himself the "Sun of suns"; calling this apparent sun his own "reflection". He called the sun a "Vedantin", because he saw the sun doing "all his work according to or on the principles of Vedanta". The sun is the source of all life, all energy to the world, but he bestows it impersonally. In the words of Rama, "Everything comes to pass through him, because he depends upon himself, because he lives that life within him. This is the principle. The sun has no idea that he is working, but as the sun is impersonal, he is so charming and attractive."

The Foundation for the Study of Cycles has revealed thirteen hundred phenomena related to the sun; such as spot cycles from the auroras, comets, meteor-showers through germ cell maturation, the electrical potential of trees, blood pressure and blood sugar content, water, earthquakes, volcanic erruptions, radio and sound waves, to stock prices, fashion and creativity. In fact, everything seems influenced as in a gigantic solar film by the sun.[10] According to Rama, "all this earth, this world of yours is vivified, this earth of yours is brought into life; O, how slowly but surely. Nature wakes up; rivers wake up; you know at night they are frozen, but the sun comes up, warms them, gives them life, and they flow. Roses and flowers on the banks of the lakes and streams are blown up by the warm, loving rays of the sun."[11] For the poet the sun is the emblem of light and knowledge in the material world.

The poet is never alone when alone in the picturesque splendour of blooming Nature, because every form and motion talks to him musically. In the lap of Nature every look is heroical and stimulating. The poet perceives the "happiness of the morning of Id" in the "decorated ornamentation of nature".

The very look of the sparkling waterfalls fills him with perpetual youth. The trees decorated with garlands of tender tendrils of climbers, studded with flowers, like well dressed persons, invite him to "partake" in the "marriage feast". According to a Persian poet (whom Rama loves to quote), "My Beloved appears in this world with graceful gait and enchanting ornamentation." In joy and wonder Rama exclaims, "The blooming beauty of the hilly gorgeousness is prepared to sacrifice its all for only one glance of Rama. It has been said in the Greek mythology that the fairy of beauty is born out of the foam. But you yourself see her here, dancing on the foam of the waterfalls.' [12] Rama's description of the influence and charm of Nature and the magic-wine she pours into his veins, has the height of imagination and the uniqueness of expression, that makes us match Rama with no one else. The manner in which he lives and moves in Nature, and the way he is carried away at the sight of the beauteous forms, is like the "silvery ropes" of waterfalls with the help of which you may, as it were "rise to the world of imagination". It is the same inebriation with which the poet perceives "The Dall Lake" as a sparkling "eyeball of a beautiful maiden", with "its surface shaking like a transparent mirror, as if its heart is beating". The joy and feeling which the description embodies is indescribable in language. The joy can be felt inwardly with many mystic-hues, while the lesson or the idea it communicates can be lived outwardly too.

Rama possessed that "one touch of nature", which according to Shakespeare, makes "the whole world kin". Rightly, it can be said of him, as Emerson said of 'Saadi' that :

> "In his every syllable,
> Lurketh Nature veritable."

For the poet, Nature without murmuring streams, rivers thundering over precipices and the invigorating, exhilarating, and elevating breath of innocent Deodar and Pine trees would be an inconceivable phenomenon. "The Deodar trees", Rama viewed, "are tall like the elongated necks of the wine pots (surahi). The gurgling springs are flowing out of them, as if wine come out of these wine pots with a bubbling and a gurgling sound." We know, Rama remained intoxicated all the time, and the wine he drank did not grow in the heart of a grape; but like his favourite Hafiz, he took the wine of everlasting bliss—the wine that is in man :

"I do not take an ordinary wine,
 But the wine of everlasting Bliss.
The blue dome is my cup,
 The sparkling light my wine."

Under the spell of this magic-wine, Rama gave up his all to the Ganga of renunciation. "O Ganga", he sang, "I sacrificed my all to thee." At the very thought of separation from her, he felt sorrowful and crestfallen. Rama had several times waded across the swift currents of the Ganga. He threw away his body consciousness into the Ganga and was blessed with the intoxication of extreme happiness. Even though he walked over thorns yet he saw only the roses. It was due to his faith that "There are no thorns for the man who sees only roses."[13] Thus he sang what he had inwardly become :

"My Mistress is buxom wind,
I taste the breath of showers.
To me, the whispering leaves are kind.
And sweet the lips of flowers.
I find welcome in the skies.
Another in grass."

Rama touched life with an "entranced rapture", and using the analogy of the sun for "the eternal real Atman" he compared life's gross, subtle and seed bodies with the changing states of a river. According to Rama, dazzling, sparkling and beautiful white glaciers conceal the greatest rivers of the world. Here in these glaciers, is the source or the seed body of the rivers. It is like the "Karna" or causal body of man. It resembles the nebular state of the earth from which have sprung up, by slow degrees, our vegetable kingdom, animal kingdom and man. Out of the deep sleep state springs our dreaming state. In the dreamland we come, as it were, from the glaciers to the lower mountains. Here the subtle body, the dreaming self is like a brook that enters into a fantastic land of poetic region. It is as changeable and fickle, as quick and playful as the running brook. "Here we have", Rama observed, "beautiful nightingales and other birds singing, indicting valentines all the year round. Here we have magnificent warbles filling the air with sweet notes, and also we find amongst the magnificent, beautiful, charming trees the most attractive Ganga, or some other stream, treading its winding course in a zig-zag way, playing frisking about in the mountains."[14] This second stage of the river is the subtle body, that was present in the seed form upon the snow-capped mountains. In the plains, the same river, the same Ganga becomes a mighty stream losing its original transparency and its original limpidness. It becomes dirty, turbid and changed in colour and speed. This third stage of the river's life is like the gross body of the river. It is like the waking state of life that puts on the gross material elements, like costumes.

The secret significance that the singing rills and streams unveil before Rama, show that it is not the landscape that is important, but the impact of the scene and what it stands for. It stands as an expression of the Real, that, like the sun, shines on the "nothingness or chaos" of our "deep sleep". It remains untouched by these stages of consciousness. This is our real Self, that is not only present in the wakeful state; it is equally present in the deep sleep state; it is also equally present under all changes and circumstances. Knowing it :

"How sweet and strong a food I find !
No fear, no grief, no hankering pain;
All delight, or sun or rain."

Rama finds Nature a great moral force. His approach to her is rational, ethical and spiritual. He finds rationality and order at the heart of things. The blame for man's suffering he did not, like the poets of the Upanishads, appropriate to

God in Heaven. Every act of man, whether good or bad is compensated by Nature. All the indifference, wildness and mercilessness in the operation of Nature may seem to us rude and inhuman, but the poet's reflection shows that it is for the good of man. These discipline and temper the lover of Nature and help him to build a strong will to withstand any suffering, and learn from her what Emerson called "the lesson of worship". Nature solicits "the pure in heart", and gives him access to her inner-most mysteries. Wordsworth, too, considers Nature as the "anchor of my purest thought", a great moral force that "subdues" and "chastens" the wild passion of man. This is the path to regain infancy in spiritual manhood and become a "man-child", who has washed away all the dirt and dross of 'I' and 'mine' from his mind. It is not an ordinary child steeped in ignorance, but a child grown bright with wisdom and self-knowledge.

Nature is not a sentimentalist, and does not cosset or pamper us. She is always stern in executing her plan. We only suffer, writes Emerson, in his essay on 'Illusions', "when we break the laws", and lose our grip of "the central reality". According to Rama, it is the plan of Nature that we should realise our goal, the life divine on earth. "It is the Law of Nature that at the bayonet's point, you must rise to your God-Head, and if you do not do that, well, slaps after slaps, knocks after knocks will be your lot."[15] Look at the aura of the sun; that fair, bright, most welcome view animates the mind and encourages us to become a "transparent eyeball" and ascend the highest summits of the delectable mountains. Nature is ever watchful and if we commit a sin in the most solitary cave, "You will in no time be astonished", observes Rama, "to see that the very grass under your feet stands up and bears testimony against you. You will in no time see that the very walls, the very trees have tongues and speak. You cannot cheat Nature, Providence. This is truth; this is a law."[16] The plan of Nature is freedom. She exalts in forming, dissolving and reforming her crystals. Changeless change is the essential condition of life. The poet asks us to work in the world as Nature works, distributing work, making work and finishing work for all, with no selfish or egoistic desire, but always :

"Moving so silently and swiftly,
And noiselessly passing by,
In a world in which it is not concerned,
But working without a murmur or sigh,
No thought of reward or position high,
O joy, O joy, O joy."

Rama's experience shows that Nature stands on our side when we persist and overcome precluding seeming difficulties. If we conquer our vain struggles and temptations and persist in standing by Truth, then all the objects in the world turn into pictures and emblems of God. Then we shall find ourselves living in the "world of miracles". According to Rama, "Nature is waiting anxiously upon the ruler of the universe. You are the master of the universe, you are the husband of the whole world, if you persist by the Truth."[17]

Nature or Prakriti, which is reckoned to be a deceptive power that degrades the Purusha into lower forms, is not so to Rama. He finds Nature "keen to reveal her real personality", even though the Purusha has to suffer humility in the bodies of ants, monkeys etc.; yet it is due to Prakriti that the Purusha "got the human form".[18] Even, his attachment to divine knowledge is due to her and it is she who helps him to realise that he is above bondage and suffering. The Purusha, from the vedantic point of view, is not selfish, but like Shiva, "the blissful substratum", is ever ready to offer his breast for her cosmic dance. In reality, the plan of Nature is identity in separateness, unity in diversity. The apparent polarity exists for the purpose of the cosmic drama that is being enacted on the principle of "each in all" and "all in each". In the words of Rama, "it is the law of Nature that, he who does not believe in dualism or differentiation, has the entire force of nature at his beck and call".[19] Nothing in the world is single; all the forms of Nature are linked together and the existence of one depends on the other. The material forms are patterned energy; their true meaning lies, not in their external appearance, but in our perception of "the law divine" that expresses through them relatedness and identity. The dance of myriad forms is the interconnected rhythm in the principle of "the law divine"; the Supreme Purusha who hangs and strings these different forms to the tune He sings. "There is universal power", Rama points out, "latent in all the so called different objects, which arranges the entire show, according to the universal laws of Nature". It is due to this "Law of continuity", that our minds, our feelings, and our psychology are related to each other, as one. Even, according to science, a body cannot act upon another body if there is no continuity between the two. It is because of this "law of continuity" that we are all united to one another psychologically. The universe is indeed one verse. Shelley, too has given an apt expression of this truth in his lyrical outburst, in the following words :

"Nothing in the world is single,
All things by law divine,
In one another's mingle—
Why not I with thine."

This is the poet's perception of the one conscious power working throughout the universe. It is all pervading and interpenetrating. We just have to :

"See the mountain kiss high heaven,
And the waves clasp one another,
No sister flower would be forgiven,
If it disdained its brother."
(Love's Philosophy)

In reality, the God of the trees and other objects is the same as that of man. Rama felt the "trees of the wood are my next of kin", and the "rocks alive with what beats in me". Trees, animals and birds are therefore, our brothers, and we are the children of Mother Nature or God which is the common motive force of all animate and inanimate forms. Rama says, "you have to acquire that state in which you realise the entire universe to have become your body. The beasts, birds, the mountains, the trees are your own self. The flooding rivers are like the circulation of blood in your arteries, the sun and the moon are like your eyes. It is your own heart that is throbbing in the thorax of all."[20]

"In everything my breath I feel,
In earth and moon and sun I reel,
I blow in air and grow in grass,
I flow in rivers, trow in mass."

Rama, Plato and the poets of the Upanishads, exalted contemplative and reflective faculties of man. It is as a result of these powers that the poet finds access to the profound mysteries of Nature and Soul. The integral vision of the poet sees the world as "as open book" that instructs, provokes and challenges the highest powers of man. With the power of concentration, the poet perceives Nature as the incarnation of thought, and beyond the thinking process as the vision of the transcendent Self that penetrates all thought. To the poet, the fragrance of flowers, the singing birds, the murmur of streams and the various other beautiful objects of Nature are no doubt matter; but he finds this matter all the time being transformed into power, thought and exhilaration; being changed into God-consciousness, and being converted into music, creating lofty ideas in us. For poetic imagination conceives outward motion as an emotion inwards and the subjective like a seed of flowers in the objective existence of the plant. Outward matter is itself transformed into thought and the poet, like Wordsworth perceives an "ennobling interchange of action from within and without". Rama too, like Wordsworth, sees "the inner world above the frame of things" in beauty exalted. "In the Himalayas", Rama says, "material objects are changed into mental thoughts—just as water is turned or condensed into aqueous vapours, aqueous vapour into water. What does it prove ? That both are the same. Similarly, if matter were different from mind, then mind would not affect matter, and vice versa."[21] Rama believes that the world is mind precipitated and that the volatile essence is for ever escaping again into the state of free thought. "Hence the virtue and pungency", Rama says, "of the influence on the mind of natural objects, whether inorganic or organised. Man is imprisoned, man crystalised, man vegetative, speaks to man impersonated."[22]

In the Gospel of Nature, Rama finds an ordered change of Evolution working to materialise her plan of perfection. Its purpose is to achieve a higher form of life which she aims at through man, who is gradually marching to attain the status of God-man. The principle of the survival of the fittest linked to the law of Evolution, does not mean for Rama that only a savage who has merely muscular and physical strength, can by bullying others survive. The gospel of Nature gives us the following law : "Whatever is right shall justify itself sooner or later by becoming might. Truth is tough. It will not break like a bubble at a touch."[23] Moreover, it is not always the fittest that survive. Sometimes, due to certain unforeseen phenomenal changes, the weakest happen to survive, while those who boast of their strength fall. To the poet, every individual is an epitome of the universe; therefore, according to him, "there is only one law which governs the universe. In the case of tears, rolling down from the eyes of a lover, the same Law of Gravitation works, as we find, when meteors fall from the heavens".[24]

The poet finds this "Law of Evolution" or the onward march of Nature applicable everywhere—in the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms. Knowing it, he cannot rest until the goal is reached. He finds the purpose of life achieves its perfection in activity, while stagnation brings death. "A horse", says Rama, "meant to run and carry loads, is whipped when he stops on the way or does not move forward."[25] This also is true in the case of individuals and nations, who refuse to pay any heed to the call of Nature and do not advance. Nature opens their eyes with hard blows and kicks which ignorant people in their frustration call the strokes of Fate. It is the weak and vicious who cast blame on Fate and give up their initiative to work. "Refusal to move onward", Rama says, "is considered a sacrilege and is called 'Tamogun', inertness or inactivity."[26] The poet understands that man is not the final verdict of the law of Evolution. Man has yet to evolve into higher levels of consciousness. He has to rise from his selfishness, which is essentially the characteristic of animals, and be refined and spiritualised. Rama believes, that the ultimate aim of Nature is the birth of the selfless man who can finally evolve into the universal man, the Godhood.

Thus has the poet patterned his life's energy, and has with his highly evolved intuition "ascended over-mind as well as supramental regions of Satchchidananda's double movement of involution and evolution, descent and ascent, concealing and manifesting, hiding and seeking".[27] There is no evolution in the Self which remains ever the same in the midst of changing shows :

"He changes the dress and flings;
Old garments gone,
Fresh forms put on.
He is neat and clean,
And whenever seen,
....
Old order passed, another came,
In both is He the same."

In the landscape of Evolution Rama perceives the manifestation of the divine Being as involved in matter. It is the evolution of matter and an emergence of Existence, Knowledge and Delight from it. The name and form that the Divine takes as masks, to play the endless game of hide and seek, are "nothing but an illusion in my estimation".[28] They are like the clouds that dissolve, but leave a permanent message behind. They bring "a cup of nectar" from the Lord and go back to Him. "Such are in fact, all attractive objects. They reflect Rama's glory for a second and dissolve. Insane indeed must be he, who falls in love with the passing clouds and yet folks endeavour to hold fast to the unsteady clouds of seeming things and cry like children finding them gone. How amusing ! O ! 'I cannot suppress laughter'."[29]

In accordance with the laws of Nature, real good consists in practically realising your oneness with God or Atma who "sleeps in the stones, breathes in the plants, moves about in the animal and wakes up in man". Every soul, in due course of time must rise to self-consciousness. He shall be constrained, according to Emerson by "intrinsic necessity" to quit "its whole system of things, its friends, and home and laws of faith", and find identity with the ultimate reality, the immortal Atma, the Self of man, who is the :

"Wisdom and spirit of the universe,
Thou soul, that art the Eternity of thought !
And giv'st the forms and images, a breath and
everlasting motion."
(Wordsworth)

To the man of realisation, who rises to the fountain-head of glory, the world becomes etherial. He perceives that :

"All rolls through all things",

and passionately continues to be a "lover of meadows and woods". The faint glimpses of the Self that Wordsworth had in his moods of abstraction, could not satiate the burning aspiration of Rama that glowed and grew bright in "wild repose", and overflowed the banks of sense and mortal frame. Rama perceived Wordsworth's "knowledge" as "the swallow on the lake" of consciousness :

"That sees and stirs the surface shadow there,
But never yet hath dipt into the abysm,
The abysm of all abysms, beneath within,
The blue of sky and the sea, the green of earth,
And in the millionth of grain."

This is freedom of the liberated soul that has transcended all categories of thought and Nature to become the Brahma of Emerson, whose nature is "to appropriate all things to itself". :

"Do suns and stars or earths and seas,
Resolve, the shadows of my dream."

Rama has become wise like his favourite serpent and like him has cast off his skin of attachment. His eyes too, like the snake's radiate magnetic power to lay a spell on the hearts of listeners. "Mark", Rama says, "the eyes of the snake are charming; they are a magnet, and small birds fly into the mouth of the snake. They have a look of indifference; there is no clinging to anything."[30] There is in him :

"No selfish aim, no tie, no bond,
To me do each and all respond,
Impersonal Lord, in foe and friend,
To me doth every object bend."

It is truly spiritual poetry, a higher grade of consciousness that has its own matter and manner—swabhava and swadharma. It is an image of "the New Man", representative of a future civilization, who has found himself and has accepted the task of raising poetry above the mystic and religious domains in order to embody spiritual vision. The spiritual vision of poetry, affirms the sovereign individual who will not be in awe of Nature, but who will ground himself on the secret harmony and union, who will declare himself as Lord; and who shall not be the doer of actions in the ordinary sense, because as he sings :

"I never did a personal deed,
Impersonal Lord I am indeed,
Invain the raving critics fought,
The dupe of senses know me not,
I am for each and all the home,
I am the Om ! the Om ! the Om !"

The vibrating sound of 'Om' is the mantra of the Real. It is the source of all knowledge, and the poems that the poet wafts in the atmosphere are only the sparks of this Mantra.

In the next chapter an attempt shall be made to unveil the nature and future importance of the poetry of spiritual vision. An attempt shall also be made to analyse how the poet is a yogi who kindles the light of spiritual consciousness, with the power of Mantra and sings in its essential simplicity the accents that transcend the realms of mystic and religious poetry. We shall also present the distinctions between mystic and religious poetry and show that spiritual poetry is naked of the vestures of humanity. It does not, like religious poetry, tone down or cover up the mundane taint, since it does not know how to transcend it in totality. The poetry of spiritual ecstasy that Rama sings, is something more than merely mystic; for it does not stop at being a signpost or an indication to the beyond, but is itself the presence and embodiment of the Beyond :

> "I have no scruple of change, nor fear of death,
> Nor was I ever born,
> Nor had I parents,
> I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute,
> I am That, I am That."

References

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3. Vol. V, pp. 360-61.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Introduction to Vol. III, p. XXIV.
6. Vol. II, p. 67.
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12, Vol. V, p. 354.
13. Vol. I, p. 48.
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16. Vol. II, pp. 25-26.
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18. Vol. V, p. 234.
19. Vol. IV, p. 205.
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27. K.D. Acharya, *Comp. Guide to Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy*, (Divya Jivan Sahitya Prakashan : Pondicherry, 1978), p. 125.
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3

The Poetry of Spiritual Vision

Rama through his poetry, rediscovers the value that was attached by the ancients to music, art and poetry without confusing the lowest with the highest, and the means of human progress with the aims of the evolutionary progress. Without glorifying the vital instincts, called in our philosophy the "prana-kosa" ; he emphatically points out that these vital wants are the source of all misery, and they bring with them a huge train of evils like inequality, injustice, violence, fraud, cavil commotion, hatred and class-selfishness. His poetry acts as a purifying force and clears the "chitta" or mind-stuff suffused by the vital wants of the prana. It does not stop with the "cittasudhi", but carries us above the current of thought sensations, called in Hindu philosophy the "manas" or mind, to "buddhi" or thought proper, and urges us to acquire like yogis the thought-organ (Visuddha buddhi), cleared of the interference of the lower strata of chitta, vital and emotional disturbances. Once we possess this freedom and cross the barrier of words and forms, we enter into the realm of spirit with undisturbed insight, intellectual ability and the aristocracy of knowledge. When body, life and mind are churned through "devotion" and "Jnana", we enjoy the bliss of the "Being" wrapped in the masks of phenomenal forms. It is He who enters into the forms of earth, heavens, birds and beasts as "life and soul" :

> "And from the husk of body and mind,
> Is thrashed out with devotion and Jnana

That Being clothed in forms and names,
That self-same Sat art thou, the same, the same."

This is the crest-jewel of Rama's poetical impulse. His poetical vision leaves far behind the phenomena of name and form, and reaches a point at which the vital, the aesthetic and the intellectual elements of poetic speech come across all together and pass into the spiritual realm intimate to our heart. He finds the emotion of beauty in the thing discovered, the life-sense and the thought rooted in the body of deep, high and wide spiritual vision :

"That changeless thread, the One in all
Is Atman pure without a Knot,
That Atman pure art thou, the same, the same.
That Being shining in the sun is no other than myself;
That Self in me is certainly the Being shining in the sun."

Just as every human being has natural and spiritual aspects, so every literature is made up of popular and classical style. The genuine artist undertakes the task of building up the spiritual life on this basis. He moulds the natural elements into the spiritual and lifts life to the order of the ideal by imparting spiritual meaning into it. According to Rama, the aim of art is to make a leap above the mere intellectual utility and make it a powerful means to the growth of spirituality in the race. As it should not be a flowery talk but, and as Sri Aurobindo points out, "spirituality in a single word is expressive of three lines of human aspiration towards divine knowledge, divine love and joy, divine strength...".[1] It is the "darshan" or the vision of "My dazzling light", before which the poet says :

"Ignorance, darkness, quake and quiver,
Tremble, shiver, and vanish for ever."

And in which, "all the rest of human being reposes, towards which it returns and the final self-revelation which is the goal of humanity. Man becomes God, and the human activity reaches its highest and noblest when it succeeds in bringing body, heart and mind into touch with spirit."[2] The poet's function is to express eternal truth not limited to the expression of form and appearance. He finds his "Me" lurking, acting and feeling in the form of Supreme Intelligence, the supreme Imagination and the supreme Energy behind the figures and forms of life. He is not worried about the dissolution of the body and the fickle play of thought waves that give rise to forms like bubbles. For as he sings :

> "The body dissolved is cast to winds,
> Well doth Infinity Me enshrine !
> All ears My ears; all eyes My eyes,
> All hands My hands, all minds My mind.
> I swallowed up Death, all difference I drank up."

It is pure spiritual poetry that transcends the bonds of religious and mystic poetry. Its function is to make us live within ourselves and open the inner sense to catch the ecstasy of this insight. His poetic utterance is a discovery of the truth hidden in the heart of man. It makes a divine poetry of humanity and what is of earth. Like our Vedic poets, he is pervadingly grandiose, sublime and puissant. He believes that the future poetry should echo this sublime spiritual tone and bring perfection to the mere physical, vital and mental life of humanity.

In the absoluteness of the spiritual tone of his poetry, Rama is like the Rishis of yore who lived and moved and had their being in the spiritual consciousness. In this, he differs from the European or rather the Hellenic spirit, and represents the Indian spirit in its true form. It is the Indian spirit to take stand upon divinity, while the Greek spirit takes its stand pre-eminently on earth and what belongs to earth. Though, Dante perhaps had more a spiritualised soul than any other, yet, his is not a Hindu soul. Dante's vision may have dominated the earth but he has not conquered it, and is yet bound to its polar rhythms. The Greek sings of the humanity of man, and Rama, as a spokesman of Indian culture, sings of the divinity of man. Rama discovers the Atman of the Upanishads, and tells us not to be passionate about the earthly life, because an equally poetic world exists in the domain of spiritual life that has the power to mould our tastes and elevate our manners. His yogic passion transmuted life into spiritual reality and made it the central theme of his poetic creation. It is said that the Jewish philosopher, Spinoza saw things sub-species eternitatis, under the figure or mode of eternity. Well, Rama can be said to see things in their essential spiritual reality. He is the poet-seer who sees differently, thinks in another way, voices himself in quite another manner than a philosopher or a prophet. The philosophical trend in Rama's poetry does not verge to the level of mere speculation, and is not a stumbling block in its appreciation. It is a solid and real feeling that emotionalises intellect and acts as a force of purification, sublimation and Katharsis. His poetry is philosophic, abstract no doubt; but it is yet the "blossom and fragrance" of all knowledge, and has its concrete application because it is backed by experience. His poetry teaches us how the infinite can be made to manifest itself in the finite. In his poetry he shows no bias for the abstract philosophic truth that does not come into contact with a particular time, space and individual. Not even for the fear of death he taught what he had not himself experienced.

The essential law and the power of his poetic creation is the outcome of his "large and powerful interpretative and intuitive vision of Nature life and man".[3] And, according to Sri Aurobindo, this is the mark of real poetry. In Rama it is inextricably woven with the growth of his personality and the constant experimentation that is ever fresh and new as the rills passing through hills and dales. Verse gives him untrammelled freedom of thought which is heavy for the objective form of prose. Even the secret appreciation in prose is due to this lyrical touch that gives charm to the structure and feeling. His verse is the considerate expression of the calmest philosophical thought. The poems are shot through and through with new and strange beauties of thought and vision of phrase and rhythm. For into them the wisdom of the lectures is packed and given perfect speech. They are more condensed than prose and express the quintessence of thought and experience in a language not Miltonic or Shakespearean but Rama's own.

His poetry consummates his ideal of perfection and achievement of freedom from all bondages of this ephemeral existence. It is further a coordination of his contemplative, creative, imaginative faculties, critical reasoning and discriminative power. It, further evolves an image of the poet, possessing cultivated eye with cultivated spirit, who knows what Shelley means through his lyric rapture in 'Adonais' :

"...One spirit's plastic stress,
Sweeps through the dull dense world,
And death is a low mist which cannot blot,
The brightness it may veil."

Rama has felt its presence so intensely in "darkness and in light", that he has himself become everything. The "forms of space and time" are the fine "garments" that Rama puts on for his sport. Hence, he cannot like Shelley, feel himself lost and fallen, and doubt :

"Whence are we, and why are we ? Of what scene,
The actors or spectators ? Great and mean,
Meet massed in death...."

Rama has unlocked the mystery of the Self after ascending the steps of matter, life, mind, intelligence and spirit. He has found that the cosmic mystery, the inmost being of man is beyond death, disease and desire. That is the reason why without any doubt he sings :

"I was not born, nor grow, nor die,
Dumb nature through the body works,
It is the ego sows and reaps,
Not I, the Self unchanging."

This is the supreme yogic consciousness that withdraws from the normal mental consciousness and becomes awake and alive in another order of consciousness. He is not conscious in his creation nor is he unconscious; but like the true yogi possesses a willed control over his instruments. He is "Light of lights" and his artistic inspiration is an emanation of Light, the breath from the Self or real Me that "cannot die":

"...though forever death,
Weave back and fro in the wrap of me.
I was never born, yet my births of breath,
Are as many as waves on the sleepless sea."

In this sense the supreme poet is a yogi, and here comes the role of the mystic, who detaches himself from the unforeseen or unexpected modes of "psychoses" or psychological states, and rises into this higher consciousness beyond the brain and mind, and thus, knows the why and how of things. In the words of Nolini Kanta Gupta, "One becomes a perfectly conscious operator and still retains all spontaneity and freshness and wonder and magic that are usually associated with inconscience and irreflection."[4] Nolini Kanta further points out that "the sense of evolution, the march of human consciousness demands and prophesies that the future poet has to be a mystic—in him will be fulfilled the travail of man's conscious working".[5] Rama is a yogi, who has realised the Self or Brahman in its resplendent glory, and his poetry is a supreme revelatory utterance of That. From this centre he sets flowing a surge of creative rhythm which becomes the expressive body of his vision. Thus he sings:

"Hither and thither weave,
From birth to grave,
An endless web,
A changing sea,
Of glowing life,
Thus in the whistling loom of time,
I fly weaving the living robe of Deity."

In "weaving the living robe of Deity", Rama enters into the mystic domain of infinitely greater potency than the domain of intra-atomic forces. For getting entrance into the mystic realms, one must have the right temperament and character along with the true mind and understanding. It is not simply an objective knowledge of empirical science or a problem of inquiry in logic and science. For the poet it can be an ideal to be lived and achieved, but cannot be attained through intelligence or by much learning. It is to seek union with the Deity, and has nothing occult, or esoteric in it. It is to give a sincere call to "My Loved one" to :

> "...unfold thy heart to me,
> Wake, awake !"

and be like the poet overwhelmed by the vision. The poet's "soul's desire" cannot be quenched by the ever growing "Himalayan snows", because :

> "...deeper flows for ever,
> The passion of my soul,
> Then wake, awake !"

In his passionate hunger for the union with his beloved Krishna, Rama touchingly appealed to Him to tear all "veils and screens", the curtains and covers :

> "Which half reveal,
> And half conceal that glorious love of mine."

He cannot endure separation. Any thought of duality brings out tears from his eyes to drown his body consciousness. In this moment of divine madness, he is ready to give up all, if his Beloved ceases only to play this game of hide and seek. Rama gives vent to his intense longing with heart-rendering feelings in the following words :

> O eyes ! what use have I of ye, if you see not Krishna, close, close forever ! O hand ! if ye touch not His feet, of what

> avail are ye to me ? wither up, be palsied ! O Lord ! if by giving up life Thou comest, here I offer it to Thee.

Here, like Christian mystics, the poet passes through the stages of the purgative (consisting in the preliminary elimination of wordly interests and eradication of the passions originating from them), and the illuminative (after desire is subdued) and the mystic then enters into "Mahabhava" or contemplative. The ultimate goal is the union of the mystic subject with the divine object. That is why the mystic solicits in words that fill hearts with sublime passion for :

"My darling dear ! Why veils and screens ?
Are you ugly ? Are you proud or shy ?
Why covers and curtains, why ?
Pray strip Thee naked do,
I pray Thee, do I pray,
I'll have no Nay,
Today."

This mystical experience surges from the very centre of the heart. The poet gets the conscious awakening, when his Beloved answers his soliciting and graces him with a vision of His all-embracing spiritual character. The poet says, "His answer flashed as lightning in my heart", and with a thundering voice ordered the poet to :

"Tear, tear out the blinds,
Yourself don't conceal,
Burn, burn off the seal,
Rend asunder the veil,
Come hail, all hail."

The reason is that the Supreme is not an object which we can see with our finite eyes. The poet knows, as long as the duality persists; and the "claims, clingings" and "designs" continue to raise the walls of "mine" and "thine", so long the real nature of the Beloved remains veiled. Even the desire to have a "darshan" of Him is a limitation. How can we see It as an object, when It is both the subject and object, when it is the light by which we see and the light which we see? It is the function of the poet to "set men free from desires", and show us truth in the workings of Nature or in the workings of life. He demonstrates before us an act of real surrender, the whole-hearted offering of everything at the feet of his Beloved. Then only dawns knowledge through identity of being that proclaims :

"My Self is thine, thine is mine."

It is an embracing experience, penetration which is possible when the knower totally identifies himself with the object. "Identify yourself" instructs Rama, "then you are strong, full of power". It ushers in a sudden illumination when the mystic's soul touches the infinite, becomes intensely conscious of it, nay, one with it, through the illumination of joy :

"Delightful ! delicious ! how lovely and sweet,
His covers I find my covers and sheets,
His blankets and quilts, my blankets and quilts."

And the time comes when the outer expression of truth reaches its white light of simplicity through the inner realisation. The vision pours itself into thought-images and the poet's soul, seized by the inner sense, exclaims :

"Lo' . off go the blankets !
Off covers and quilts,
He is I, I He,
No He, She, Me or Thee !
OM ! OM !"

This rhythmic revelation or intuition arises out of the Soul's sight of God. In the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan, it "is not one of comprehension, it is one of apprehension...feeling that it is there and also feeling the inadequacy of our intellect to grasp the ultimate nature of the Reality."[6]

The nature of the Absolute is manifested by the comment of silence. The mystics of all faiths and creeds, from the Rishis of the Upanishads downwards, are at one in this belief in the immanence of God. St. Augustine steeped in neoplatonism defined the Absolute in negative terms : "God is not even to be called ineffable, for to say this is to make an assertion about him." Shelley said in "Queen Mab" that there is no God, but added a note : "This negation must be understood solely to affect a creative deity. The hypothesis of a pervading Spirit co-eternal with the universe remains unshaken." Shelley gives expression to this vision in the following words :

"He is a presence to be felt and known,
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone
Which wields the world with never wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above."
(Adonais)

The mystic's experience tells us that God is All but it also says God is nothing. "It is not this", "not this". It is "inscrutable without name and form". Kant's doctrine of transcendental freedom affirms a wholly free (noumenal) self located in a realm transcending the causally connected phenomena projected by the knowing mind. This gives the mystic the kind of knowledge where he feels that he is spiritual in character, and there is something more than what meets the eye. It may be occult to the outward eyes, but for the mystic it is the secret of his life and being. He experiences the presence of the immanent Divine in man and Nature; the idea of unity through immanent divine life, between man—a spiritual entity—and nature a manifestation of the Divine, and the idea of organic unity of all life transcending all outward phenomena, of perfect harmony between Man, Nature and God. The following words overflowing with joy and charged by Rama consciousness aptly express the truth :

"All time is now, all distance here,
All problems solved, solution clear,

All ill and good, all bitter and sweet,
In those my throbbing doth beat,
All lovers I am, all sweet hearts I.
………………
Impersonal Lord, in foe and friend,
To me doth every object bend."

It is not philosophical thinking, dry and bald, but like the seers of the Upanishads it is spiritual seeing and spiritual intuition expressing itself in the language of poetry. The native power of Rama's poetry is its insight and not so much its intellectual thought and matter. The lines :

"Impersonal Lord, in foe and friend,
To me doth every object bend."

show that the mystic has reached the transcendent supreme after he has read from the book of the world its faint glimmerings. He, then has no hesitation to throw the book aside, and soar straight into "the pure empyrean of the Infinite" and assert his majesty :

"I never did a personal deed,
Impersonal Lord I am indeed.
Invain did the raving critics fought,
The dupe of senses know me not.
I am for each and all the home,
I am the OM ! the OM ! the OM."

The word "Aum" is the sound form of the transcendent supreme and manifests Itself in a three-fold way, as the great Upanishadic mahavakyas or phrases reveal :

(1) The transcendental unity; the One alone exists, there is nothing other than the One—ekamevadvitiym;

(2) The cosmic unity : all existence is One. Whatever exists is the one. There are no separate existences; Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma…neha nanasti kinchana;

(3) That One is I, you too are that one; Soham, Tattvamasi; this may be called the individual unity.

After attaining this elevation of the Upanishads, the personality of the seer is lost in the eternity of vision :

"And just when I discover,
I melt in joyful sighs,
Oh; I am the Love ! I am the Lover !
Oh, I am the Lover, I am the Lover !"

This is spiritual poetry proper, and Rama believes that the future trend of evolution reveals that the artist shall transcend the vital and mental and come to the expression of the poetry of spiritual vision. There is no doubt that the majority of human beings have been taught and trained to live mostly on earth, and that every thing that is not conditioned by the senses is vague and abstract to them. They consider poetry as the expression of human joys and sorrows; the tears in mortal things, of which Virgil spoke. Such people, in the words of Arnold, are :

"...here as on a darkling plain,
Swept with confused alarms of struggling and flight,
Where ignorant armies class by the night."
(Dover Beach)

We also try to seek the human element, the "wearinesss, the fever and the fret" in poetry, and the touch of the flesh or a "kiss of Helen" to make us "mad". This may be sweet to us, as it was to Faustus, but it is sheer escape and a deliberate attempt to neglect our responsibility and remain hypnotised by the false sense of our ego. "What we obtain in this way", writes Nolini Kanta Gupta, "is humanity in its lower degrees, the surface formulations"[7] that delude, deceive and cheat us. We know this world "through our consciousness" but Rama says that our "consciousness undergoes three kinds of changes"—the waking consciousness, the dreaming consciousness and the deep sleep consciousness—and is like a thermometer or a barometer that "gauges the temperature or the pressure of the world". Rama is a philosopher in his own way—a philosopher, warbling out his philosophy in the raptures of poetry. By "philosophy" Rama means spiritual truth and spiritual realization. He experienced that the deepest fount of poetry springs from the reflection on the mystery of our own Self, the why and wither of it all. It is the problem of existence itself, of God, soul and immortality that gives "full breath and integral force to poetic inspiration". These are the things of momentous importance and are at the very root of life and reality.

Rama asks us to rise above the deep sleep consciousness and realise the Sun (Atman) that keeps shining on that nothingness from which flows our dreaming condition. It is, as according to the Bible, "God created the world out of nothing." Just as the sun creates rivers out of the snow, "the sun of suns", the God in us, shines upon the seeming nothingness—the surface formulations—which the Hindus call Maya. Out of this, flows the subject, the object and the different basins of gross bodies. The real Atman is like the sun whose "sacred current" flows in "dreams", in wakefulness the current grows and grows. It "inundates in wild repose", it transcends the bonds of "senses" and the "mortal frame":

> "It spreads in all the world and flows,
> It inundates in the wild repose.
> For this the sun, he daily rose,
> For this the universe did role,
> All births and deaths for this."

The training in the university of Nature mellowed the mind of Rama with the juice of realization. He directly perceived that man is a key to the universe, and that his mind is somehow linked with the mind behind creation. The "way to keep you fresh and new" was for him to get to the fountainhead of all joy and knowledge. It is to understand the universe and apprehend the mystery behind man by breaking down the opposition of the self and the not-self by making both express the one spirit. It is the alchemy of genius that achieves the miraculous and breaks down the barriers between mind and matter, so as to "make the external internal, the internal external, to make nature thought, and thought nature".[8] Such was for Coleridge "the mystery of genius in the Fine arts"; it reminds one of Wordsworth who wrote in his note to the 'Ode on the Intimations of Immortality': "I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not a part from, but inherent in my own immaterial existence." This "immaterial existence" is the real Self or Atman, which is neither the subject nor the object; but is the causeless cause of both. The myriad forms that ebb and flow with the rhythms of Nature are doubtless different and particular, but the law of identity finds sameness in things unlike, and the poet perceives that :

> "The straight line of youth, and the curves of age,
> Are surface figures on me as a page."

The knower, or the real Subject according to Rama is not the intellect or the understanding or reason; because anything that can be perceived becomes an object. The reason or intellect is also an object because we can think and reason about intellect and lay down its laws. The word "subject" is called in Sanskrit "Drashta", the word "object" is called "Drishya", and the "real subject", Rama says, "in Sanskrit is the Brahman or Atman, the Will of Schopenhauer or Absolute Intellect of Hegel."[9] The subject cannot be conceived, the real subject cannot be perceived. The mind cannot reach the pure self, no, nor even the intellect. Our relative knowledge ends there. When the mind is freed from all selfish activity and its duality vanishes; then only the Self is revealed. This state has been described by the commentator Shankara as supersensuous perception. When the seer experiences that "I'm the boundless ocean of harmony" and exclaims in wonder :

> "The subject—which perceives,
>   The object—thing perceived,

As waves in me they double,
In me the world's a bubble."

According to Rama, matter, mind, intellect and egoism cannot be the knower or the perceiver. All these are movements in the mind. The faculty of intellection, or egoism are the instruments of action in the hands of the Self which gives luminosity to them. Therefore, there must be some one behind them all, who is the real manifester, the real seer, the real enjoyer, and He in Sanskrit is called the Atman, the soul of man, the real self of man. And

"By such texts the Vedas preach,
The Light of lights, the self-supreme;
That self art thou, ye ! same, the same."

Rama does not, like other idealists, identify the soul with the mind, whose progress is indefinite, and which manifests itself fully while in the physical body. He finds impossibility of evolving subject from an object, since, for him object cannot exist without pre-existing subject. According to the 'Yoga-Vassihta', "The subject cannot be aware of the object unless they are related. And there cannot exist any relation between two heterogeneous things.... If they were utterly different from each other, knowledge would not have been possible, the subject would ever remain unaware of the object, as a stone of the taste of sugar." Knowledge, for Rama, is not merely individual; it transcends the given and reaches beyond itself. When we reach absolute knowledge the distinction between subject and object is overcome. Then we can perceive like the poet, that "in our intellect the 'Thing-in-itself' is present, what we call the Atman. The Real self is living in your intellect and there is the 'Thing-in-itself' or the Reality in every object in this world."[10] It is :

"The same that works thy eyes and hands,
The same doth move what by thee stands.
The One within is all without,

The One does bring what comes about.
No foreign force, no foe, no other,
Exists by thee whatever,
Art thou; verily the same, the same."

Rama declares that the Atman is not motion, because motion cannot create consciousness; and because motion produces nothing but motion. The source of all knowledge and perception is the Self that is not the effect of motion or vibration. It is that which makes us see and understand there is such a thing as motion or vibration. In the words of the Upanishad, "That which does not vibrate is our true self." It goes faster than the mind. Time and space exist in mind. The Self or Atman forms the background of the mind. Therefore, the self is quicker and faster than the activity of the mind. Mind can go nowhere without depending upon the Atman, the knower. That is what the poet means when he sings :

"O Lightning ! O Light !
O thought, quick and bright !
Come, let us run a race,
Avaunt ! Avaunt ! Fly ! Fly !
But you cann't
With me keep pace."

Further, any perception presupposes the presence of an unchanging perceiver. The physical eye, with its diverse characteristics of keenness, dullness or blindness cannot be the seer. The mind too with its various features such as doubt, deliberation, calmness, fickleness, fear and fearlessness witnessed by consciousness cannot be the seer. The visible eye is the external instrument of perception. It carries the impression on to the chitta that vibrates a little. This is called the Manas, the mind. The reaction creates doubt in the mind which it presents to the determinative faculty, Buddhi. The intellect resolves it by referring to the store-house of memories. Behind the Buddhi is Ahamkara, egoism. The reactions of the self consciousness or ego are various and detached, as is known from such statements, 'I am happy', 'I am unhappy' and so on. As in a moving picture there is the necessity of a motionless subject or screen on to which the pictures must be focussed to give the idea of continuity; so, behind ego and intelligence there must be an unmoving and detached element. This is the Self of man the Purusha, the Atman or the unchanging consciousness that unifies the detached experiences of the ego; otherwise they cannot be coordinated.

Again, Atman is not a concept, and our thinking in terms of concepts cannot give us Its realisation. The 'Taittiriya Upanishad' declares, "words together with the mind return without comprehending it". It surpasses all description. Language cannot reach it. Our faculty of egoism, the faculty of intellection, the faculty of cognition, the organs and the instruments of the body, all of them are the "forms of space and time". They obey His commands, who according to the Atharva Veda is "desireless, motionless, immortal, self-existence, completely satisfied within Himself, great and perfect. Realizing that immortal, ever fresh, ever new Atman, man conquers death and attains immortality". It is only then :

"The body dissolved is cast to the winds,
While Death, Infinity me enshrine."

And the poet by swallowing up death, and drinking up all difference has become wise like the seer in the "Mundako Upanishad" who perceives "THAT exists everywhere beyond sight, beyond grasp, without form", and the sun, the twinkling stars, the smiles of fragrant flowers, the songs of Nightingales, the breaths of cosmic air are His outer coverings that half-reveal and half-conceal Him who is "eternal, all pervading, ever unchangeable, the source of all things", and who existed :

"Before ever land was,
Before ever the sea,
Or the soft hair of the grass,
Or the fair limbs of the tree,
....
I was, and thy soul was in me.

First life on my sources.
First drifted and swam;
Out of me are the forces,
That save it, or damn."

The one self is the support of the whole universe which but for it would be nowhere. God did not say, "I shall create", but rather, "I shall become many. I shall manifest myself in many forms." He himself becomes the visible and invisible universe and :

"Out of me man and woman, and wild beast and bird.
Before God was, I am,
I the mark that is missed.
And the arrows that miss.
I the mouth that is kissed.
And the breath in the kiss.
The search and the sought and the seeker, the soul,
And the body that is."

Rama is the poet-seer who wears a halo round him, and brings all people to the same state of vibration that he has in his own mind. We, then, feel this age old fissure in consciousness, this duality of idealism and realism melting before the light of Rama consciousness. He does not distinguish between the practical man and the idealist; and does not make any compromise between the two extremes. For him the division is artificial. He is not tempted by the abstract mystic to turn away in disgust from the world of discord and contradiction. His feeling of kinship and solidarity with the universe expresses itself in his work for a changed world and happiest humanity. He is sustained by the vision of man becoming perfect, and his love goes out to embrace whole human race in his nimble and firm clasp—uniting the earth and the heaven in a "merry wedlock" :

"Merry wedlock, union,
On earth or heaven,

Is a dim foreshadowing symbol
Of my perfect embrace
Of the whole human race,
And my clasp so firm and nimble."

Those who talk of matter and spirit as separate entities, as poles apart, they know not that matter is that unknown substance out of which all phenomenal forms are fashioned. The universal substance appears as possessing these two attributes of subject and object, of spirit, mind or ego and of matter or non-ego. They are like the two modes of the one eternal substance which is known and unknowable existence. It was called "substantia" by Spinoza. Herbert Spencer calls it the "unknowable". It is the same as "Ding-an-sich" or the transcendental "Thing-in-itself" of Kant. Plato named it the "Good". It is the "Over-Soul" of Emerson, while in Vedanta it is called Brahman. Matter in its simplest state can be reduced to the same infinite substance Brahman which forms the background of mind or spirit. The objective side of that substance appears as matter, the subjective side as spirit. According to Rama "the mind and the intellect are nothing but Brahman; even the body is nothing else but Brahman, and every thing in the world is nothing else but Brahman".

Twentieth century laboratories have begun to confirm the tremendous idea that there is but one universal substance which forms the basis of our entire material universe. More recently, matter as represented by the electron, has been converted into light, as represented by the photon, and vice versa. The work of physicists like Rutherford, Fermi, Anderson and Millikan has brought us to the practical and proven scientific principle that the inner structure of matter is reducible to a single fundamental substance, and essential and immortal energy which is the "life" of the myriad forms that make up our universe. This universe is not a chance creation without any pattern. There is a chain of cause and affect that knits forms of Nature in a particular order and sets the wheel of time in motion. The cause manifests itself into effect and wherever we see an effect we can analyse its cause. It follows, if God is the cause of the universe, and universe is the effect, then God has become the universe. Then, as the poet says, "I am one with thee", and the souls are the effect, so God, the cause has become the souls. "As from a mass of fire an infinite number of sparks fly, even so from the Eternal One all this universe of form has come out."

From this, we can infer that there is but "One Reality", Ekam Sat, the supreme Will out of which this universe and its archetypal ideas emanate. The ideas become facts and principles that sustain and direct the ebb and flow of the phenomenal world. Sir James Jeans, astronomer, in his book 'The Mysterious Universe', says, "The universe can be best pictured as consisting of pure thought, the thought of what, for want of a wider word, we must describe as a mathematical thinker." According to Rama, this universe is but "my idea", and do not :

"...suns and stars or earths and seas

Revolve, the shadows of My dream ?"

When the act of reflection dawns in the mind, and man's awakened consciousness suddenly discovers "The world is my idea" that embodies itself in a rhythmic creation of Beauty. "It then becomes clear and certain to him", writes Arthur Schopenhauer that "what he knows is not a sun and an earth, but only an eye that sees a sun, a hand that feels an earth; that the world which surrounds him is there only as an idea, i.e. only in relation to something else, the consciousness, which he is himself". Rama in his lecture on 'Maya or The When And the Why of the World' (delivered on January 15, 1903, in the Golden Gate Hall, San Francisco), declared that it can be directly and experimentally proved that this world is nothing else but God, and "we can show to you conclusively through experiment that when you advance high enough in realization of the Truth, this world will disappear for you", and you will see :

"Fickle, transient is all,
This show, it palls."

According to the 'Yoga-Vasishta', the existence of the world exists in thought, and, "there is no difference between realism and idealism, for everything is ultimately of the nature of thought". We are what we feel, imagine and think. Our picture of the world is the outcome of this mental stuff. The world we conceive is not what it is, or what it ought to be, but a mode of our consciousness.

This fluctuating state of the world has been beautifully depicted by Rama in two of his poems which contain the "logic of events" and the "living realisation" of the poet. In the poem 'The World I saw, Studied and Learnt', Rama takes this world as a "primer" and reads in its "letters" the wisdom of the ages. Its forms stir spiritual sensation in his pure heart and he captures their symbolic significance. They transform before his magic eyes into "hieroglyphic toys" reflecting Rama and His glory on their faces. He sings that these letters

"...were hieroglyphic toys
In different ways did me inscribe."

But as he had already realized that all these forms are "Mayavic lies", hung on the "thread Divine", so he sees this world a "rosary" that exists for the rememberance of God only. It has no other purpose, except to remind us of our own Self. Like beads, forms pass and repass, appear and disappear and live and die, but make us live constantly in tune with the Divine, that, like the "thread", remains untouched by birth or death and

"No words can ever Me describe",

because it has

"No rest, no motion, mine or thine."

There is no action and reaction in the Atman. It does not ebb and flow, and is not a compound like the beads of forms. Therefore, it abides eternally :

"Yet the thread survives.
That thread Divine !
Is mine, is mine !

The golden thread I cherish,
Let pass the forms or perish."

So, after knowing the true nature of the world, and the futile allurements of its greatest achievements; he closed the book and relegated it to the "waste-paper basket"; meaning thereby that this world has no independent existence. It is Maya, and :

"Our systems gay,
May have their day,
And pass away."

The poet is not satisfied by merely throwing the "primer" in the dust-bin; but his passion to burn up duality takes up "this booklet leaf by leaf", and burns it to light the tobacco of his desires in the "pipe" of discrimination. He lights it with the fire of knowledge and puffs out through his "mouth" the "smoke" of all samskaras and sings gladly :

"This alphabet so curious one day,
I relegate to the waste-paper basket.
I burn this booklet leaf by leaf,
To light my lovely smoking pipe.
I smoke and blow it through my mouth,
And watch the curly smoke go out."

Thus, according to the poet, we come to the conclusion that this world seems to be existing only as long as we are dreaming of it. It is not "Satya" nor is it unreal like a barren woman's son, or a sky-flower. "This so solid-seeming world", writes Carlyle in 'Sartor Resartus', "after all, is but an air image over Me, the only reality; and nature with its thousand-fold productions and destructions, but the reflex of our inward force, the phantasy of our dream." It is a huge dream arisen within the mind in the same way as the soldiers while dreaming, experience their own battle-fields, each within his own mind, and quite distinct from that of another. Descartes also comes to the same conclusion, when he writes in 'Meditations', "When I consider the matter carefully, I do not find a single characteristics by means of which I can certainly determine whether I am awake or whether I dream. The visions of a dream and the experiences of my waking state are so much alike that I am completetely puzzled, and I do not really know that I am not dreaming at this moment." Is not this tone of the philosopher, warbled in musical accents by the poet, in these lines :

"Is all at last
　A dream of past ?
Is nothing true,
　He, I or you ?"

And again :

"These things that seem,
Are nothing but dreams,
Of that Eternal Sun,
The changeless One."

Rama, like the true vedantin desists from answering the "Why" and "how" of the world. He believes that we have no right to ask this question. He plainly confesses his inability to answer the question, because, according to him, we can answer the question only of a thing that exists; but when the world does not exist, how can we even raise the question of its "why" and "whence" ? Why and wherefore, the ideas of time space and causation are the part of the word manifestation. It is impossible to answer them, because the questions cannot be logically formulated. Rama established no hypothesis and puts forth no theory. He says that the world exists because we see it, and if we close our senses and do not put them into activity, there is no world. This may seem to us strange, but such is the position. "Now the question is", Rama observed, "the creator in order to create the world must have stood somewhere, if he had a resting place, then the world was already present before it was created, because the resting place must be somewhere in the world. The world was present before it was created."[11]

So long we are dreaming we cannot tell when these objects come into existence. In dream the rivers, dales, mountains and landscapes appear to be natural and permanent, as if lasting for ever. As long as we are dreaming we can never know the "why", "when" and "wherefore" of dream. It is only when we wake up, and shake off delusion, that the whole is gone and disappears. "When the (dreaming) subject", Rama says, "wakes up, the whole problem is solved." And, after waking up, the (dreaming) subject says, "Oh, that was a dream, there was no reality at all." Similarly, when we wake up to our divine majesty, realize the Truth and achieve that perfect liberation which Rama holds up before us, we can perceive then, that this world is a mere joke, mere play-thing, a mere illusion and nothing else. Then we shall know what Goethe meant when he sang :

"I Tell you what is man's supreme vocation,
Before Me there is no world,
It is My creation.
I raised the sun from out the sea,
And moon begin her changeful course with."

Carlyle, too, observed that this "where" and "when" so "mysteriously inseparable from our thoughts" are only "superficial terrestrial adhesions". The phenomenal world consists of the dualities that depend upon the Absolute reality, and "That" alone is real. Although, It is one, still it appears as many by Its inscrutable power known in Vedanta as Maya.

The word "Maya" that Rama has used is not to evade the problem and soar into the realms of abstract idealism, leaving us behind gaping in astonishment. The theory of Maya is one of the pillars upon which, his poetry of the spiritual vision not only rests, but also finds its perfect meaning and expression. The word Maya has been manipulated in various fashions, but the Maya theory of Rama, in its last developed form, is neither Idealism nor Realism, not is it a theory. It is simple statement of facts—of what we are and what we see around us. It tells us how the universe is going on, and how we are floating down the river of life which is continually changing with no stop and no rest. We are all going to death, and yet this tremendous clinging to life exists. "Somehow", Swami Vivekananda says, "We do not know why we cling to life; we cannot give it up. And this is Maya. Death is stalking day and night over this earth of ours, but at the same time we think we shall live eternally."[12] What does the statement of the existence of the world then mean ? The real meaning of "why" is Maya. MA means not, and YA means that. The world has no real existence; it has no unchangeable, immovable, infinite existence. "The world," Rama observes, "is not real. Vedanta says, also, it is not unreal, because unreal means something which never is, according to the definition of Vedanta, like the horns of a man."[13] Seeing that it appears to be present just now, we have to work in and through it. Is the world real ? If it would have been, then we would have not uttered such a painful cry :

> "Is all a myth,
> This kin and kith ?
> Oh ! Where shall I turn ?
> To whom return,
> The heart that burns
> The breast that yearns ?"

Is the world real ? Neti, nit. Is the world unreal ? Neti, nit. Then is the world partly real and partly unreal ? Vedanta says, "Maya", Neti, nit. "Not that even", Rama declares, because "unreality and reality cannot subsist together. The answers to these questions are called the Maya theory of Vedanta."[14] They call this Maya "Anirvachaniya", an indescribable realm upon which we cannot bring our intellect to bear, a realm where we ought not to tread.

According to Rama, this world is made up of two kinds of illusions that come under the category of Maya. The whole is the play of name-form, and this creates the difference between good and evil, and keeps us hypnotized in the extrinsic (image seen in a mirror) and in the intrinsic (in case of snake seen in a rope) illusions. It is due to the Maya or illusion that the serpent of names-forms and differentiations appear in the rope of reality, this underlying substance or whatever you might call it. "There we see", Rama says, "that after this intrinsic illusion is completed, the extrinsic illusion comes up, and on account of this extrinsic illusion, we look upon these names-forms, these personalities and these individualities as having a reality of their own, as subsisting by themselves, as existing by themselves, as real on their own account."[15] We forget that our faith in things that are fleeting as "fog and dew" will keep us in a perpetual state of restlessness because :

"No sooner we love,
Than things dissolve."

and keep our parched throats dry, wandering in vain in the wilderness for a drop of nectar. We can find our "way" that leads to the "secret treasure", when we heed the words of 'Shvetashvatara' Upanishad, and "know nature to be Maya and the Ruler of this Maya to be the Lord Himself". Maya is a kind of mist that has come between us and Truth. The juggler Maya succeeds in creating a sense of division even in respect of the undivided Brahman as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva; thus making even the learned bestow different attitudes towards the three. The "why" and "how" of it cannot be explained in terms of logic; because, in reality it is in the realm of the Spirit, and can thus only be communed in silence. "Your intellect", Rama says, "has work enough in the material planes, in the empirical realms, but in the realms of metaphysics you have to come only by one way and one way only, and that one way is the way of love, feeling and faith, rather than knowledge." There is a region of the unknowable, the immutable, which, though it forms the basis of science, cannot however be established by science and here intellect cannot venture further. It is a strange kind of knowledge, a strange kind of God-consciousness that transcends the mere play of words, and about which one can say, like the seer of the 'Kena' Upanishad :

"I cannot say I know it :
Nor can I say I do not know it;
Beyond knowing and not knowing, It is."

This is the poetry of power that lifts us from the surface life of birth and death. The power which it conveys is of the Spirit and that only is the source of such poetry. This Atman is to be seen, experienced and intuited, in and through the modifications of the mind. This is the sine qua non of spiritual life in India. Rama is not an exception, but as an incarnation of the ancient Rishi-lineage, he takes his flight beyond the description of images and expression of words. He is not limited by them; he only transforms them into sparks of fire with "My Self, Radium pure". When from "My Radium of heart" he starts his "X-arys", the forms of things overflow with myriad suggestions and lose themselves and disappear into a blaze of revelation :

"Myself, the Self is all to me,
The body, whither it goes, what care I,
If tossed here and there, or left to die.
I am Freedom's Self, let the body, as salt-sea-spray,
Be dashed hither and thither or up and away."

The realization of the "Freedom's Self" is a revelation and a great mine of strength. It is the cumulative achievement of the power of "Mantra", that takes one to the highest pitches of poetry and the delightful speech of the sublime order. As for example :

"I never did a personal deed,
Impersonal lord I am indeed."

And again :

I am for each and all the home,
I am the OM, the OM, the OM."

Here poetry verges on to the level of mantra. The definition of

"Mantra" is Brahman manifested as sound-form. It is the "word" that was in the "beginning" and the "word" that was with God, and the "word" was God. When Vak (speech) "does not assert itself in the least", says Nolini Kanta Gupta, "when it does not hanker after displaying its own skill, remains self-enamoured like a deer with the fragrance of its musk, having no other object than to possess inner delight, then only it amounts to mantra."[16] In this sense Rama's poetry is truly, the mantra of the Real, because in it, "the true creator", writes Sri Aurobindo, "the true hearer is the soul",[17] and its attainment is possible, when you settle down into the mood of bodilessness with the brooding thought that you are not this body. You must always have the realisation that you are the all pervading Atman. Here speech passes beyond its normal individuality and becomes faithful to the truth beyond speech. When speech is obedient to the laws of Mantra or Truth, it unveils its inner potency and gives shape to that reality.

For Rama, the identity of language and thought make the word and the world "kin to each other". There can be no thought without language; the world being related to language and all its objects being the "counterpart of the corresponding ideas". Now, Rama says, "We want to have a single word or sound which will represent the whole world. We want some word which will represent the power, the energy, the force, the governing substance and the thing-in-itself which upholds the universe." OM is that perfect name, the representative of all language and thought. All names and forms, like consonants, are dependents and cannot be pronounced without an "underlying noumenon" or reality. "This underlying reality", Rama says, "is proved to be Absolute Being, Absolute Knowledge and Absolute Bliss, denoted respectively by A, U, M. The rhythm in the poetry is based on the natural respiration and expiration of the sound SOHAM. In SOHAM, the consonants S and H stand for the phenomenal names, forms and shapes, and the inherent OM represents the underlying reality.

The poet-seer Rama, finds great importance in the sacred mantram OM, because, it represents for him the "end of knowledge", the end of speech, "a point where all speech, all thought stops"; the highest point at which the artist himself disappears, where the personality of the seer is lost in the eternity of vision, and :

"Slips on lo ! Once for all the veil to fling !
Flow, flow, O wreaths, flow fair and free.
Flow wreaths of tears of joy, flow free.
What glorious aureole wonderous ring.
O nectar of life ! O magic wine
To fill my pores of body and mind !"

Here mantra or the Word reaches and sinks deep into the soul. All, that the poet now speaks is poetry; real poetry, the poetry of God-consciousness, sublime with divine ideas. This heightening and intensity is the poetry of Mantra that speaks out sovereignly the secrets and the power of the word. Such poetry is a lovely streak of truth-vision, the "soundless sound" of the inner Being that is represented by this word OM. When we play the mantram on the flute of this body, the reverberating sound of OM piercing through the prana or breath, will unlock the "Treasures within". "Even though", Rama says, "we may not be able to prove the virtue of this mantram by the logic of the world, yet there is no denial of the powerful effect which this mantram, chanted in the proper way produces on the character of man, or of the [illegible] has of unfolding the inner secrets and placing all th [illegible] of the world at your disposal."[18] This power [illegible] rhythmic words of the poet "the highest form of [illegible] that gives vent to his "soul-view", which is a natural [illegible] towards the expression of :

"...the wingless flight,
The mindless thought, the eyeless sight,
The mouthless talk,
The handless grasp so tight,
Am I, am I, am I."

The poet and the seer have become one, and Vak (speech) divested of its shiverings, reveals the most beautiful and benevolent image of Brahman as the source of all sound. He takes us where imagination stops, where all language stops, and lands us into the indescribable Reality. Where speech ends, the realm of Brahman begins, and spiritual poetry proper emanates. If this Brahman or 'I' could be explained in our human terminology then, that would bring It within the laws of time, space and causation. The Transcendent cannot fall within the categories of Nature, that is why the poet sings :

"...I must sadly own,
It will never be known,
What am I."

Here the spirit speaks in its own wild accents. The poet does not clothe its significance in human symbols and allegories or in the images and figures of mere earthly and secular life. He presents his spiritual experiences in their nakedness, just as they are seen and realized. As for example :

"I am the origin and the end
Of all this changeful universe,
There is, no mankind, naught beyond,
For all is strung on Me alone
As are the beads upon the thread."

He does not attempt to tone down the rigour of truth with contrivances that easily charm and capture the common human mind and heart. It is not a colourless or a too colourful truism nor a vague generalisation. It is clear thought, and radiant judgement based on Self-experience. It is an experience of the bare Truth without any prop of external symbolism. It has almost a scientific exactness and precision. The straightness and fullness of vision in the poems is characteristic of the vedic Rishis. He has, like them, that supernal genius that moulds speech into the very expression of what is beyond speech. To him every finite object can give a leap into the Infinite. Rama's purpose, like that of the Vedic Rishis, was not to humanize the Divine, rather it was to divinize the human.

In Rama's poetry we find the three modes of human consciousness—the spiritual, the intellectual and the physical—wonderfully blended into the organic whole. He is grand and full of the ardours of poetry; bypassing the agreeable and pleasurable aspects that get on your nerves. For him poetry, is not merely beauty and imagination, but power and creative vision that :

"...overflows the banks,
Of senses and the mortal frame.
And inundates in wild repose."

Here, then is nothing occult or of the consciousness of another domain that is sundered from the life of the earth. Here, unlike the mystic poets, Rama does not involve himself in the play of secular and spiritual images to continue the unending game of hide-and-seek between them. For example most of the mystic songs of Vaishnava poets are master-pieces, but from the heights of Rama consciousness, they are too human, and in them it is the human manner and significance that touches and moves us. Spiritual significance is suggested, and is a matter of deduction. As for example, the following lines of Tagore :

"Who comes along singing and steering his boat ?
It seems a face familiar,
He goes in full-sail, turns nor right not left;
The waves break helplessly at sides !
His face looks familiar...."
(The Golden Boat)

Though in Tagore, the reference to the spirit is evident, still the major-chord is this play of the mundane and the spiritual and an attempt to use appearance as a symbol of spiritual import.

Spiritual poetry emits the sparks of the super-solar-blaze, while the mystic poetry is characteristically lunar communication; the delight and magic of the mind and mental imagination. Mystic consciousness may sometimes like to dwell in the domain of the divine and feel a sense of unity, but it would not like to acquire the Divine nature and function, proclaiming:

"I hitch to my chariot,
The Fates and the Gods."

From the Vedantic point of view; mystic consciousness is like the hiranyagarbha consciousness; while spiritual consciousness proper is prajnaghana, the revelatory knowledge. In mystic consciousness there is a play of imagination, fancy and decorative aesthetics; while in spiritual consciousness there is pure and simple vision.

Rama, thus foresees the age of spiritual art that will spring out of the superconscious realms and impart creative powers to the mind and heart of man. This is the "distinguishing trait", Nolini Kanta Gupta says, "of the real spiritual consciousness that seems to be developing in the poetic creation of tomorrow, e.g. it has the same rationality, clarity, concreteness of perception as the scientific spirit has in its own domain and still it is rounded off with a hollow of magic and miracle."[19] The trend of evolution in poetic-expression shows an attempt at a return to the spiritual source of poetic inspiration which has tapped by the Vedic poets. The poet-seer sees nothing but spirituality. In him the duel between the philosopher and the poet ends because, he is the hermit of an absolute purity. His eye probes into an unexpected world; and discovers that the artist too shares the Upanishadic problem :

> By whom impelled does the mind fall to its target, what is the agent that is behind the eye and sees through the eyes, what is the hearing and what the speech that their representative sense organs do not and cannot convey and record adequately or at all ?

This is what teases and baffles the human power of intelligence as doth eternity. But, when the vision of the Truth breaks, the poet can commune It in and through the modifications of the mind. He is enraptured by the sense of delight, because, it is for the sake of Ananda, that the Absolute manifests Itself in the universe. At the dawn of self-knowledge. the poet's heart melts into joy and he understands how Truth reveals itself in beauty; the beauty that is not a phantasy, but which has the everlasting meaning of reality, and which is perfected through love.

This shall be the subject-matter of our next chapter. We shall try to probe into the secret well of delight, and explain how love, knowledge and perpetual activity are the various elements of delight. There is, in Rama, no doubt the absence of the aesthetic motive, and although, the sense of beauty is there, it is involved in a deeper strand of consciousness; in the awareness and possession of the Truth. This consciousness of the Reality is also Delight and Immortality that resolves itself into inalienable harmony and beauty. For Rama, Atman is "sweeter than the sweetest", and moreover it on account of its sweetness alone that other objects look sweet. According to the Taitiraiya Upanishad, Ananda alone is Brahman. Creatures live in Ananda and ultimately they merge in Ananda. It is Divine Knowledge, the charming magic of the Atman that infuses extra-ordinary beauty in the possessor who, with the tunes of divine songs, sheds "lustre near and far" and adorns Nature with a new meaning. Further, where there is light, there is cheer and joy. Rasamaya, the lunar aspect of Immortality and beauty, and the solar aspect of light and the truth, are but two co-ordinated elements of the ultimate Reality. The poet lives in the eternal present, enjoying "the past and future, flower and star, near and far" as "Me and mine" :

"O Joy !
Thrilling peace !
Undulating Bliss,
What a heaven."

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4

Delight at the Heart of Creation

Artistic creation is not only a glimpse of the Eternal; but in its wider expression it is also a participation in its existence. It involves a process that presents the ideal so near to us that we become one with It, nay become It. That is what Rama aims at in his poetic creation. His enlightened soul soars aloft to clasp the whole universe with its outspread wings, and is carried by the waves of delight that permeate the universe. When his poetic imagination touches these heights; he becomes uniquely simple and transcends the bonds of convention to occupy "the exalted position of Lordship". It is then, that his art reaches the highest pinnacle of art, precisely because it does not aim at being artistic. It is involved in a deeper strand of consciousness, a position of integral mastery over matter. It is the truth-consciousness that overcomes all the darkness and obscurity of the lower stratas of consciousness. He believes that art like education (e-out, duco-I draw) must draw out from the immeasurable powers within and not try to push in from without.

To illustrate this concept of his, Rama believes that the true genius must be an illumined artist like "Kavi", and not like "Ravi" who tried to draw all sorts of outside pictures on the wall of his mind. Ravi's mind, stuffed with the colours of his crammed and confused ideas, saw the external and aimed at aesthetic perfection only. While, Ravi was drawing paintings on his wall, Kavi was busy in polishing and cleaning his wall, so much so, that he made it as smooth as a mirror. He was conscious of another dimension of reality, "the meaningful

Knowledge of Brahman", which could not be the result of "the spurious and superficial knowledge of art or industry". Art and industry can create wonderful surprises, but on that account, we cannot say "nothing could be thought than this". Rama says, when "Kavi himself lifted the curtain" all were "wonder struck". "The king and the courtiers were dumbfounded with admiration, as if they were breathless. They were standing agape. They were so much dazzled with the smooth cleanliness of Kavi's wall that they stood aghast."[1] According to the law of Reflection of light, Kavi had got reflected on his wall the entire paintings of Ravi's wall. Rama pleads, "why do you not purify your heart by proper education and let it be illumined like the wall of Kavi".[2]

Just as, with the poets of the Upanishads, so too, with Rama, the aesthetic motive is totally absent. The sense of beauty which is there is based on the possession of Truth and Reality. It is grounded in the knowledge that Delight and love are the attributes of the Unknown—the one thing which, if known, gives the knowledge of all else. This consciousness of Truth is also Delight, the perfect Bliss and Love that is the fulfilment of Beauty. According to Rama, the artist should not take it for granted that beauty of language is the primary task of poetry. Emphasis on good expression and the suitability of words is not the only purpose of creation. Such art has nothing of the sublime that breeds ecstasy. It only caters to public interest and deludes with the pleasures of poetry. The poets and artists of our present era, caught in the cobwebs of the mechanical urges of social life, involve their art in the confusion of words and colours. They present only the vision of life distraught by cares and tortured by the violence of their own desires and wishes. The genius in them remains enshrined and cannot move. Until our worries and desires are not silent, and the bonds of matter are not cast aside, it is not possible to "enjoy the pleasures of Divine or Truthful life". Rama says, "If the Divine knowledge is not there, passions, emotions and desires are sure to come up again."[3] How is it then possible to remain always happy and peaceful, under all circumstances ? When, in the fire of knowledge, the artist converts his selfish-connections and desires into "ashes", he enjoys real happiness. Just as to the man of Divine knowledge, the written word OM, immediately reveals its true meaning, so, too, to the rapt eyes of the spiritual artist, all sense objects disappear from his view and reveal only God. The poet then, must be a Yogi who :

> "Like birds that slumber on the sea,
> Unconscious where the current runs,
> We rest on God's Infinity,
> On bliss that circles stars and suns."

When we listen to these sacred words, all our bondages break into pieces, and the knowledge it brings expands our individuality into infinity. It is here, that "Lord Varuna" lifts "from our own head a veil of cloud; a strong current released from some unknown quarter flows on, inundating both the banks of our heart".[4] A learned man who only stuffs the books into his mind, and does not live upto their teaching in a practical way, does not deserve to be respected as a Ved-pathi or one well-versed in the Vedas. He is like an ass carrying a load of sandalwood on his back, ignorant of its practical utility. He remains animal, satisfied in carnal pleasures, and cannot even have a smell of the original state of "rasa" which one enjoys after the veil of darkness is lifted. In the Vedic hymns three gods—Varuna, Mitra, Aryama—symbolic of the eternal, the beautiful and the power come together. Varuna embodies the immensity, the infinity, or the absolute nature of the Self. The Absolute is all power, all strength and the dynamic dance of the creation is represented by Aryama. Mitra is union, harmony, beauty, bliss; without which the inscrutable nature of the Self and its power remains unmanifest.

The artist, in Rama's opinion must be a Yogi, for he only can exercise proper control over the vagrancy of the mind and pay the price in order to win the inalienable experience of harmony and beauty, and ascend to the infinite wideness of Varuna. Then only is he allowed to partake of the limitless and unfathomable ocean of delight and eternal life. He has to take up the Trishul, the Cross or the Law; to pierce through the dense darkness of matter and severe the ties of Body, Vital and Mind. "In poetic genius", Nolini Kanta says, "these three gods are at once present. Varuna forms the basis on which stand Mitra and Aryama—in the vast expense of freedom, in the wide unbarred progress of the spiritual vision heaves up in surges, the gracefully rhythmic dances of forces."[5] Victory lies in our freedom from the binding servitude of the ego, from the disgusting passions of life's urges and from the inertia of the body. One must possess a lion's courage to stand firm on the rock of experience and declare :

"Free, free is everyone to me,
No bondage, limit, fault I see.
No debt, no duty, fraud or fear,
I am the One, the Now, the Here."

The poet's genius consists in his ability to make us free from narrowness, to open our eyes to perceive, that whenever we feel happiness or Ananda, it is the image of the Self. To illustrate this Rama says, "One cannot enjoy real happiness, unless one is completely merged in one's self."[6] Rama sings of the "Self Supreme" and adores universal ideas. He expresses them musically in such a thrilling manner, that we cannot help but appreciate and welcome them and, try ourselves to chisel our lives according to this supreme vision. These ideas are for all, without any distinction of race, caste or creed; only we should have the "brain and eye to see" that :

"Mountain, valley, sky and sea,
Are for all humanity."

Self knowledge, in the fullest sense, is actual living in the Absolute experience. For the poet, it is actually being himself transformed into the Absolute. The knowledge of the Self is really the only knowledge worthy of the name. Other kinds of knowledge are merely the semblance of that, for they do not give us the essence of all things i.e. knowing which one knows everything. For Rama real knowledge, *is being* and becoming.

It is a self-scrutiny; it is to be regenerated in mind and baptised in spirit. Thus it is the expansion of the individual into the Infinite, and the extinction of separateness of the Self which is all, and in which all beings are rooted :

"The Infinite is that, the Infinite is this;
And on and on, unchanged is Infinite.
Goes out the Infinite from the Infinite
And remains unchanged the Infinite."

It is an extinction only of those feelings which make us an imaginary something, living a life of separation and misery, and which keep us apart and forgetful of the whole, which we really are. "Gyan" (knowledge) according to Rama, "is that stage wherein you feel from the bottom of your heart, in an effortless and natural way, that 'I am He', Thou Art That :"[7] and this seeming "outward loss" :

"......betrays the Infinite,
The seeming game displays the Infinite,
The going, coming, substracting, adding,
are seeming mode and truth of the Infinite."

It is the subjective change of vision from that of an individual to that of the Absolute—Truth-Knowledge-Infinity. In the words of Rama, "It is the knowledge of the Self that is the store-house of Divine nectar."[8] It is the knowledge that "pulsates with delight", and that radiates a flood of pure and intense joy that no storms of sorrow, or the glitter of prosperity can disturb. It is a pure state of consciousness in which truth and reality are made up of love and harmony. Here then :

"No physical action, good or evil,
No mental action, virtuous or ill,
No shame or fame or praise or blame,
Could taint me e'er, no kind of game,
Nothing but flood of glory !"

The romantic adventure of the poet ends when he merges in "the Lonely and unique,"[9] and wakes into "a sudden blaze of God".[10] Thus he is able to say, "I am standing firmly in this world. And my heart is full of peace and contentment. Time and Space lick my feet like dogs. So how can I be imprisoned by description ?" Standing upon the roof of the world, Rama now and then enjoys the fun. He cries out in ecstasy like an intoxicated person and exclaims : "The kings of the world are like pieces of chess to me. All the affairs of peace and war are my interesting moves. When the world shudders, due to my dance of merriment I look at it and burst forth into laughter"[11] immediately :

"The world turns aside,
    To make room for me,
I come, Blazing Light !
    And the shadows must flee."

This stage of Self-realisation is a point where happiness percolates through every fibre of one's body. When the poet sees this 'I' everywhere, he is filled with ecstasy to perceive it full of love, as a result of which he openly dances in God-intoxication.

To be established in spiritual glory and to regain infancy in wisdom, is to dwell in a heaven of joy and become knowledge incarnate. Then, like an innocent child there is no thinking of this world or of the other. For him, there are neither gods or their creation, neither mine nor thine, neither good nor evil, and neither manners nor arrogance. He is the divine child whom delicate and beautiful ladies cannot fascinate, and to whom the glamour and glory of this world is meaningless. Though he appears to be simple and innocent, yet he is so fearless as to jump, like Maharishi Bhrigu on the chest of God Himself. Like a child, he is not afraid of any body; he handles lightly even Indra, and :

"I hitch to my chariot,
    The Fates and the Gods,

With Thunder of cannons,
Proclaim it abroad."

This is our Ram-Badshah, who has adorned himself with the "pearls of dispassion" and the "crown of divine knowledge". Only after implanting within the Vishnu of virtue and peace, Lakshmi, Goddess of Beauty, Love and Joy knock at his doors to serve her husband, the eternal Truth.

The poet undertakes this infinite adventure; he launches out on the "trackless sea" and sails for the "unknown shores" on the "waves of ecstasy". Worries and troubles dare not to remain in his heart. "The round world", he says, "is like My ball to play with" ; because he is a "tornado of highest magnitude", always "open" and yet "hidden" so :

"No, no one can tone me,
Say, who could have injured.
And who could atone me ?
No, no one can tone me."

Always drunk with the wine of Soma (God-realisation), Rama dances merrily, and remains in blissful mood. He knows no other talk except that of Ananda or Bliss. "So nothing but Ananda can emanate from Rama".[12] He moves in that state of mind in which the presence of God penetrates every pore of his body; and not only his tongue, but every atom of his body is thrilled. The mind of the poet becomes saturated with Divine nectar and his heart is filled with ecstasy. His 'I', stretched to an eternal everywhere, contains the whole world in its embrace. Thus he does not see the form of any object at all, be it solid, liquid, or gas, etc.; instead, he perceives the One and One alone. His hearing and sight are now one song of delight, and in every contact he feels a deep and invading thrill. The flowing Ganga and the blowing wind disappear from his sight, and become Divinity alone. He finds all happening in 'Me'. The roses blossom, the nightingales weep, the beautiful dissolving colours of dawn, snow-clad Mount Kailash sparkles, the sea rolls, and the moon shines in Me, in Me, in Me.[13] If this is so, then :

"To whom shall I give thanks,
To whom shall I turn and look up,
When Bliss absolute,
When light immeasurable,
Is manifest even in Me."

According to Rama, the very nature of happiness, is to make your mind sit close to God, to yoke your soul to its fountainhead. The word ecstasy (e=out and sto=to stand) "shows" says Rama, "that happiness, no matter under what conditions or circumstances experienced, is nothing different from standing so to say, outside the body, mind and world." He wants us to be full of serenity and to have dispassionate tranquility; because to be "dejected and gloomy, is a religious, social, political and domestic crime". That face is not worth seeing which does not make others happy and only those who are happy and cheerful with divine consciousness, are successful in their lives. Vedanta is neither optimism. nor pessimism; rather it is the highest pinnacle of optimism. Vedantic Religion, according to Rama may be summed up in a single commandment : "Keep yourself perfectly happy and at rest, no matter what happens; be it death, hunger, calumny or anything. Be cheerful and at peace on the ground of your Godhead, to which thou shalt be ever true." It is for this reason that :

"Happiness is the only good,
The time to be happy is now.
The place to be happy is here.
The way to be happy is to make others so."

The purpose of life, according to Rama is happiness, and it is natural for every living being to avoid pain and exert for happiness. Everyone living, struggles for pleasure, and invents and tries to possess such instruments and means that he thinks would add to his pleasure. "Ananda", in the words of

Sri Aurobindo, "is the true creative principle. All take birth from this Divine Bliss. Ananda is the secret principle of all being and the support of all activity of being. Ananda is the very essence of Brahman; it is the supreme nature of omnipresent Reality." According to the Taitiriya Upanishad :

> "Understand Ananda alone to be Brahman.
> From Ananda alone is the creation.
> The creatures live in Ananda, and
> ultimately they merge in Ananda."

The poet tells us to search within, because the pleasant phenomena of this world can never satisfy and give us peace. Standing himself between the visible and invisible worlds he experiences "the Spirit of Delight" at the heart of creation, and achieves freedom from blind servitude to ordinary experience. Therefore he cautions us to see how when "Antony sought happiness in love, Brutus in glory and Caesar in dominion", all were frustrated in their efforts and Rama adds that, "the first found disgrace, the second disgust, and the last ingratitude, and each destruction."[14] The objects of the world, when measured with the scales of eternal Law, are found to be limitations only, but "the wonder of things absolute," which is "born from the silence of Eternity" is revealed to us through Self-realisation which alone can bring us peace and enduring happiness.

Such is the experience of the poet who lives in the Absolute in which all particulars and individualities are harmonised and lost in a fashion we can not know, until we rise to that level of experience ourselves. It is a unique joy, so fascinating; and ignorant people in vain try to imitate it with the help of intoxicants. This delight is not the monopoly of the ascetic nor is it born from the disgust of experience. It is the presence of the Self as the Master of our being, and this universe is His "lila" that breaks into a thousand forms of beauty. This 'Lila' according to Sri Aurobindo :

> "...In us is the thousandfold spirit who is One,
> An eternal thinker calm and great and wise,

A seer whose eye is an all-regarding sun,
A poet of the cosmic mysteries."[15]

When the poet realizes this principle of joy in all things, and when it enters into his poetic mood as the supremely intimate element of poetic personality, he effects the union of Earth and Heaven. The forms of the earth are transmuted into divine truth-forms, and poet unseals and distributes the bubbling springs of joy, love and peace :

"I shall shower oceans of love,
And bathe the world in joy !
If any dare oppose, welcome ! come.
For I shall shower oceans of love."

Delight is the cardinal element in Rama's poetic-personality. It is the rapture, the bliss of identity that flames through his nerves and thrills the cells and atoms of his body. After weeding out the sense of division, and after pulling down the walls of limited existence, he has set at large unveiled Bliss. Now divine madness has possessed him, he staggers and mutters : "Range wild and surge and storm, ocean of ecstasy, and level down the earth and heavens. Drown deep and shatter and scatter all thought and care. O ! what have I to do with these ? Come, let us drink deep and deeper still." He has risen above mortal pleasures to the divine surprise and the raptures of the spirit excite his nerves and veins so much that he is forced to "dance in glee" :

"In stars, in suns, in oceans free
In moons and clouds, in woods I dance,
In will, emotions, mind I dance,
I sing, I sing, I am symphony,
I'm boundless ocean of Harmony."

It was the boon of Liberation which art ultimately bestowed on the poet. Here art achieved its consummation by making the poet abide by the spirit's calm, and turn his life's symphony into a throb of eternity. This state is characterised by Sri Aurobindo in the following words of his poem 'Liberation' :

> "My mind is hushed in a wide and endless light,
> My heart a solitude of delight and peace."[16]

Delight and beauty are one in their unaging youth. To the poet, all is beautiful. He has not to wait all winter for spring to bring its joy. Every season has the beauty and the hidden music of Nature, that never ceases. It is a sorry aesthetic taste indeed that finds beauty in summer only. Rama says, that "pitiable is the state of the music-lover whose festidious taste must be offended and wounded a hundred times before one satisfactory tune falls to his hearing." The poet-seer is a Man of freedom, and his pleasure does not depend on landscapes, gardens, congenial company, honeyed words and things outside himself. His inner illumination casts a halo of beauty on all around him and from him radiates nothing but divine love. He sees that on the physical plane, the Divine expresses Himself in beauty. It is the "all beauteous growing one" that he finds manifesting in Nature, and the different objects—big and small, fair and foul, ugly and charming—are but strange hieroglypics, all indicating the "beloved one". These fine pictures are the different garbs of beauty covering the beloved Lord of which the poet sings :

> "In a thousand forms may Thou attempt surprise,
> Yet, all beloved One, straight know I Thee.
> Thou may with magic veils Thy face disguise,
> And yet, all present One, straight know I Thee."

The things of Nature are not beautiful absolutely; but they are in the words of Plato "stepping stones" and point to "absolute beauty". The beauty of objects, sights and sounds are expressive of spiritual states and the "particular things imply an essence of their kind". For Platinus, it is the "World-soul" that unifies the "formless multiplicity of matter" and which is also the ground of "possibility of all unity". Because it is universal, it can be contemplated without the aid of senses, provided one has attained universality in order to see and recognize it. It is in this manner of apprehension that "the synthesis of the abstract concept and the material given in sense" is made possible. It is out of this "synthesis" Hegel's conception of art takes birth. Since the experience of beauty certainly exists, it must, by Hegel's philosophy, be intelligence. He writes in 'Aesthetics': "The beauty of art is a beauty that has not only been born of the mind or spirit but born again of it." For beauty lives in seeing, and to create something truly beautiful, the artist must first see it within and realize it as a whole in his inner consciousness; only then can he communicate it outwardly. The artist comes to us proposing frankly to give nothing other than the highest quality to our moments, as they pass through our minds. The poet exalts these moments to such heights that our soul bursts out from its limits, unveils the hidden beauty breaking out :

"Here, there, and everywhere;
There, where no more 'where' ?
Now, ever, anon and than;
Then, when's no more a 'when' ?
This, that and which and what;
That, that's above 'what' ?
First, last and mid and high,
The One beyond a 'why' ?"

Such is the elusive nature of Beauty that eludes our grasp. It is "My Vast transcendence" that holds the "Cosmic Whirl". The artist with his fineness of truth-consciousness and truth-force connects names and forms with the soul, and adds to them a colour and mystic perfume, so that these that seem as many become One.

The poet attains this end by apprehending the true and the beautiful. Out of this apprehension springs the shaping power of love that alters external things and impresses on them its own inner nature. This sense of beauty, according to Edgar Allen Poe, is "an immortal instinct" deep within the mind of man. As a result of this "instinct" the poet cannot remain satisfied with the mere superficial appreciation of beauty before him; but his inner urge makes a "wild effort" to reach the deeper beauty beyond, to possess a "Loveliness whose very elements perhaps appertain to eternity." Truly, it has been said by Thomas Bailey Aldrich that :

"What is lovely never dies,
But passes into other loveliness."
(A Shadow of the Light)

Dry scientific facts cause despondence and gloom, and the Truth cannot reveal itself in this hideousness. When through the mist of facts, beauty breaks out, the words of the poet burn and his thought breathe a "solid real feeling". A secret harmony steals through our blinded hearts, all grows beautiful and like Keats, with his spiritual vision one discovers that :

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever,
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness."
(Endymion)

The different forms of Nature like the sun, moon, stars and shining rivers are lovely in the eyes of the poet because he sees them as "fallen pearls of the Reality". Rama says, "If such is the attraction of the fallen pearls, the beauty of the Reality must be simply exquisite. It can better be realized than described."[17]

According to Rama, when we view this world from the stand point of God-self, "the whole world becomes an effusion of Beauty; expression of joy, outpouring of Bliss". For the poet, manifestation of Beauty and harmony is made part of the Divine realization upon earth. Beauty interprets, expresses and manifests the eternal presence of the Self so that "when everything is my own Self", Rama says, "how could anything be other than sweetness condensed. Self is anand (bliss), therefore self-realization is equal to the realization of the whole world as Bliss-crystalised, a perception of the powers of Nature as my own hand and feet...."[18] Wherefore, the poet sings :

"My love is flowers, music, light,
My love is day, my love is night,
Dissolved in me are all dark and bright.
O what a peace, My love and I.
Good-bye, Good-bye, Good-bye."

The poet reckons Love or Beauty to be an appointed road by which humanity can climb to God. The highest beauty is to find God or Love and to reveal it through every act and expression. It is the object of universal satisfaction. According to Kant beauty is "the symbol of morally good", the categorical imperative that works and establishes itself in spite of our denial. There is an innocence at heart which defies our reason, and which, again in the words of Kant, is there in us, and also outside us, which is neither a physical necessity nor a moral freedom but which is allied to the supersensible condition of freedom. The world, being nothing but spirit made visible is, according to Rama, an emanation of its beauty. Beauty, for him is the flowering of virtue, the face that is "shaped out of innocence". Innocence, renunciation, wonder, indifference and denial of the sense of possession constitutes beauty for him. Further, for Rama, "Attractiveness whether spiritual or material is always in direct proportion to innocence." So in his estimation :

"Beautiful eyes are those that show beautiful
thought that burn below.
Beautiful lips are those whose words
Leap from the heart like songs of birds.
Beautiful hands are those that do
Work that is earnest, brave and true,
Moment by moment the whole day through."

When we try to attribute any possession to a face, we make it ugly and the sense of real joy vanishes. Transparency results only when we abnegate the sense of possession. The clothes that conceal us are not the cause of our attractiveness, and we should not try to borrow beauty from clothes, because it is the only grace in man that is the real cause of attraction. We must make simplicity fashionable and wear natural smiles, health and cheerfulness. "Damn not yourself", Rama says, "and also the so-called charming thing; see beyond, see God, tear the veil of appearance, look through and see God" :

"O happy, happy, happy Rama,
  Serene and peaceful, tranquil, calm.
My joy can nothing, nothing mar
  My course can nothing, nothing bar.
My livery wear gods, men and birds,
  My bliss supreme transcendeth words."

John Keats, who is reckoned to be the greatest lover of beauty, said, of truth being beauty and beauty truth, but there remains a great difference between his outlook and his inner experience. He loved to lose himself in a life of sensation rather than in thought and what penetrates thought. From the heights of Rama consciousness, a worshipper of beauty, unless he rises to the Upanishadic norm, he is prone to become sensuous and pagan and the "life of sensations" will have a great fascination for him. This sensuous and pagan element over-hangs the spiritual vision of Keats, Kalidasa and even Shelley cannot be excluded. The spiritual vein in all these poets remains secondary. For Rama however, the world is beautiful because it is the image of The Beautiful and because it harbours, expresses and embodies the Divine who is supreme beauty. It is He who has distributed flowery plants in this garden of the world and who has decorated it with the sun, the moon and the stars. The Self is the greatest poet of the universe. His poetry is the universe. He is also the greatest artist. His art we see in sunrise and sunset. The sun, moon and stars are nothing, but the "rhythmic creation of beauty", the painting on the infinite space by the hand of the almighty Artist.

The feelings and expressions of Beautiful in Rama, raise no doubt; they are authentic as well as evidence of the poet's unique experience. The spirit of beauty that permeates his poetry and which resides in his heart, is like the Upanishadic consciousness. It is more retiring and reticent, and opens up into skies of the brightest luminosities. It resides in its own blessed solitude, in its own spirit's privacy and has the "calm rapture of the divinised soul". Therefore, it can choose to be bare, austere and simple, and thrive on the sheer mystery that is :

> "Transcending number, one and all,
> The subject, object, knowledge, sight,
> E'en that description is not right,
> Was, is, and e'er shall be,
> Confounder of the verb 'to be'.
> The sweetest Self, the truest Me,
> No Me, No Thee, no He."

Rama, like the seers of the Upanishads, lays stress upon what is beyond form, that which the eyes cannot see, nor the vision reflect. The fascination of form may be strong for some artists, but the formless too has its beauty. Indeed, for Rama, the formless is the very sum and substance, nay, the very soul of beauty. It is this which suffuses both the realisation and the poetic creation of Rama and the Upanishadic seers. All forms that are scattered in Nature hold within themselves a secret beauty that is reflected or projected out of themselves. This beauty is above name and form, and it does not have any adequate image or representation below :

> "na tasya pratima asti."

It cannot be explained or illustrated in terms of phenomenal consciousness. In speaking about it, Rama, like the seers of the Upanishads, invariably and repeatedly refers to the two main attributes that characterise its fundamental nature. The first aspect or attribute is that of light—the brilliance, the solar effulgence—"ravitulyaarupah"—the bright, clear, shadowless Light of lights. The second aspect is that of delight,—Rasamaya—the bliss, the immortality inherent in that wide effulgence :

"anandarupam amritam yad vibhati."

For the sake of the Delight is this world created. How mysterious and wonderful is :

"The dazzling glory, my chariot of Sun,
Quintessence of Godhead, restorer of sight."

The true character and essence of beauty is light and delight i.e., "Rasamaya and Jyotirmaya". "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever", and a thing of joy is a thing of light. Joy is the radiance that drizzles from a thing of beauty. Verily, Beauty is the spirit's home, and beauty is the food of the soul. "On the bosom of God", Rama says, "grows beauty. This Kamala (lotus) springs from the navel of Brahma. Whoever loves Beauty must reach and own it through the one who sleeps on the waters." His traces are found "in the midnight planet's" blaze, in the "glistening" of the morning dew and :

"Whate'er is beautiful or fair,
Is but Thine own reflection there."

It is because :

"Thine is the starry moon of night,
The twilight eye—the dewy morn;
Whatever is beautiful and bright,
Thine hands have fashioned to adorn.
Thy glory walks in every sphere,
And all things whisper, 'God is here'."

Out of the centre of this experience overflows an all inspiring love; and, the consciousness of love's "omniscent ecstasy" perfects the sense of beauty. This feeling of love is far above our wishy-washy sentimentalism and weakening attachment. It comes exalting the Now, and creating beauty, joy, ecstasy, truth and good everywhere. The poet is impelled to embody the thing he visualizes, not so much with reference to the many below, as to the one above—not for what man sees, but for what God sees. It is towards this that he aspires and struggles.

The world with its order, design and evidence of purpose cannot be traced to non-intelligent matter. Matter is not that which produces consciousness but that which limits it, and confines its intensity within certain limits. A scientific study of Nature discloses a mystery at the heart of the universe. The scientists who were associated with the Royal Society in its early days felt that "the Heavens declare the glory of God". John Beale wrote of "the lawful and religious delight which should result from beholding the curious and wonderful frame of this our visible world". For Isaac Newton space was the "sansorium dei", "the wonderful contrivances" of the great creator held Oldenberg in awe. The great naturalist John Ray wrote a book with the title "The Wisdom of God manifested in the works of the creation." There is no doubt that the scientists recognise the presence of the Unknown, but to them it is a mystery beyond reach but in poetic vision, God can be felt and realized as the Self of ourselves. It is only through love we can approach Him with all humility and reverence. The poet's genius lies in his ability to show how a thing, limited in time and space, can be used as a meaningful symbol for the attainment of the highest glory of love. For Rama, love is "an art as well as a science". Geologists observe the minerals and stones so far removed from man, whilst the science of botany treats of a subject a "little higher" than minerals, and stays only at the shore of consciousness. Astronomy leaps into the fathomless void with the search-light of the telescope, and is unable to catch a glimpse of Love. Physiology treats of the body of man, his exterior skeleton, and tries in vain to create consciousness out of the dead material particles. Psychology treats of the different functions of the mind, and has reduces psychology to a science without a "psyche". Rama points out that, Love "treats of the realist Reality in man as well in Nature", and says that our "scientific discoveries are only sparks and scintillations from the Grand-Sun, the Fire of Love or oneness-feeling."

For Rama, all our desires are but reflections or perversions of Love. Just as for Carlyle, "Hatred is inverted love", so for Rama, "Fear is only conjested love". Love is the only force operative in reality and desire is nothing else but love. If the word "love" means an intense desire for the object, then all desires are nothing else but love. The Seers have seen that God is love; therefore, all desires are forces of God only. God is like a measureless sea and all our desires are like waves, ripples and eddies that dance in the ocean of Love. "The whole universe", Rama says, "is made up of one Infinite ocean of love." Even the force of gravitation that holds the stars together is nothing but attraction, and attraction is love only. Love between one planet and another is called gravitation. Again it is the force of "chemical affinity" that makes all chemical combinations possible. This love between atom and atom, and molecule and molecule is called chemical affinity. Love is the :

> "......origin and the end
> Of all this changeful universe."

which is :

> "The splendour of the sun and the moon,
> The essence of the Holy thought,
> The sound of sounds,......"

For Rama, "all is love", and even matter itself in the ultimate analysis, resolves into concentrated love. Step by step, Love manifests itself through matter, life, mind and intelligence. It springs as the force of affinity, cohesion, gravitation, as well as greed, desire, ambition and aspiration. "In different modes and degrees of vibration", Rama Says, "this Love appears being known as Magnetism, Electricity, light, heat, sound etc." ;

even the most accurate conception of material atoms is of their being "centres of forces". Even in our worst enemies, insidious spies, false friends, and betraying comrades, there is no other power at work but Love. Love is the only Law which governs the universe. "In the case of tears", Rama exclaims, "rolling down from the eyes of a lover, the same Law of Gravitation works, as we find, when meteors fall from the heavens. The same law is working in the shedding of tears, as in the shooting down of the stars. Similarly, the same law holds good both for worldly and Godly love."

Love is the subtlest force in the world. It gives to the personality of the artist the disinterested freedom of the eternal. The poets find in it "all true devotions' centred power". The poet who has realised Love to be only reality, can never stoop down to the love of the glittering objects, because, he understands what Coleridge meant when he sang :

"All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
　　Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
Are but the ministers of love,
　　And feed his sacred flame."

(Love)

When we realize that Love is the only Force there in reality, our redemption lies in the experience of identity with It and in the conscious and unconscious struggle to achieve that absolute love consciousness in life. The purposeful life ought to follow the line of quickest approach to the goal and unite mankind in a chain of "relationship and love". Human virtue shines when man is able to adjust the different love-forces into a single flame of consciousness and joy.

When the flame of aspiration is lit within the temple of the heart, there stir the waves of longing that carry the lover through the regions of infinite and reveal to him the "captivating one", on the condition that one has the necessary urge or Bhavana. According to an Urdu poet, "He is sure to be attracted, only if there is intensity in my love. There is attraction in love, so I do not mind, if he is apathetic towards me."[20] Bhavana is creative affirmation of something with full faith. It brings into existence or experiences something which is not already there. It is the transformation of the idea into reality by force of imagination. According to the 'Yoga-vashista', "Whatever is intensely affirmed is experienced". Spiritual bhavana is to receive Divinity into the ship of life, and to drown oneself in heavenly intoxication by taking the wine of love. Such a lover, according to Rama :

"......needs no other rosary,
Whose thread of life is strung
With beads of love and thought."

The love which is only skin-deep i.e., based only on the beauty of form, is an insult to the underlying God. Pure love is devoid of selfishness or lust. It knows no bargaining and is fed by the spirit of sacrifice. Further, pure love is natural and spontaneous. It is only when the heart is filled with the divine love, that sweet and melodious tunes come out of the poet in his complete surrender to Him, to whom :

"......belongs my whole life,
Thee I will ever serve,
In the midst of honour and strife,
O Love ! O Love ! O Love !"

What Rama found imperative in this unending lila of love was the perfect surrender or dedication and aspiration. After aspiration, surrender is the next condition necessary for success. To surrender is to fill the heart with Divine Light. Rama says, "Filling your heart with Divine Light means dedication or surrender—renunciating every thing to God. You are free to act, but are required to give up the selfish desires attached to your deeds."[21] When Rama was young his heart was stollen by the butter-eating form of Lord Krishna. He used to shed tears in divine love; often whole nights used to pass by without a wink of sleep, yet Rama remained ever refreshed. "How happy", Rama says, "are the vigils when Lord love keeps us awake! Rain storms of tears bring floods of joy, because Love rides the storm." This intensity of love urges the lover to give every thing at the behest of the Love :

> "O Love ! O Love ! O Love !
> Thy will is wholly mine,
> Just bid me whatever Thou wilt,
> My will is reflection of Thine."

Rama had a marvellous vision of the "All Sportive One" and he immediately surrendered himself entirely to Him, knowing that victory lay in giving the reins of his mind to Lord Krishna. He trained the horses (senses) to be disciplined, so that they might follow the right path of restraint and regulation as prescribed by the Lord in His 'Song Celestial or The Gita'. Therefore by :

> "Diverting the thoughts from objects of sense,
> Like horses whipped when going astray,
> Controlling the thoughts with wisdom's reins."

the poet brought his soul "Home" by surrendering the chariot (the body) the horses (the senses) and reins (the mind) to Lord Krishna or the OM.

Such a culmination in sadhna was reached after the poet played with his Beloved, an endless game of hide and seek. It was only effected through his persistent efforts. Through his perpetual longing to consecrate his life to the Lord, his mind was saturated with love, and his eyes were intoxicated with His presence. It is this that he expresses in "Love's consecration" :

> "Take this life and let it be consecrated
> Lord to Thee.
> Take my heart and let it be full saturated
> Love with Thee.

> Take my eyes and let them be intoxicated,
> God, with Thee.
> Take my hands and let them be engaged in
> sweating truth for Thee."

This surrender does not mean fatalism or an escape from action, but it is a tremendous force which makes us open to His influence. The poetry of Rama creates a magic atmosphere and is so condensed in a spirit of surrender, that nothing can enter it without being automatically filtered. He has so covered himself with the cloak of light and the joy of happy and sincere surrender, that the harmful formations sent out by bad people, the dark noisome bacilli cannot taint the brightness of his "wedding robes" of "white" and "golden" colour. He finds in the troublesome noise of the world a secret significance, such that :

> "All sounds, all voices have become Thy voice,
> Music and thunder and the cry of birds."[22]

To the rapt and concentrated eyes of Rama the "silent thoughts of Time and Space and Death" pass before him like flowing waters. These seem to him the "waves of ecstasy" that bare him through the regions of infinity into the arms of "all embracing one". Thus :

> "......mounting to thee,
> I and my soul to range in range of thee
> O thou transcendent,
> Nameless the fibre and breath."

It is this "All heart-expanding one" who according to Rama is "the anchor of his purest thought", the guide, guardian, source and "reservoir" of all his affections, and of which Nature is but a reflection. If Nature could have been the source of joy, knowledge and love, then Wordsworth could not have fallen from his transcendental heights, and in his "retreat" have not chewed the gum of the flown "splendour in grass and glory in flower" with his staggering attempt to built up a philosophy out of the faded raptures of past. Rama experiences that the Self or Sri Krishna is the source of all intelligence, power, consciousness, love and beauty. He wants to tear away this thin partition between 'I' and 'He", as, he cannot breathe a single breath, think or move a single step without "He" who is :

"So close, so close, my darling, close to me !
 Above, below, behind, within me, O, me;
How deeply, immensely and intensely you be
 My baby, my lover."

Rama has now dissolved and drowned himself in the Divine. He has organised every detail of his life—his thoughts and emotions, ideas and aspirations—around one centre, his true Self, the Divine in him, and his life exists only for the Divine. Every rhythm of Nature reflects Love's magic-mystery; the sun becomes His reflection and man is seen as "made after Thee". It is He who has "put life in man", and is seen laughing in flowers and shedding tears (of ecstasy) in rains. In the movement of air the lover feels the living touch of his Beloved, who swings in the cradle of rainbows and sings in the form of flowing rivers. The lover addresses his Love, telling, "Thou dost quick-march in the effulgence of light. Yes, it is true that these coloured robes, the rainbow, clouds, rivers, trees and various kinds of coverings are not different from Thee."[23] All these screens and veils the lover sees as many Saris, behind which shines "The effulgent body", that is half-concealed and half-revealed.

The lover entreats his love in such words that touch the very core of sensitive hearts :

"My darling dare ! Why veils and screens ?"

Why are these coverings used by Him to hide Himself and play this game of hide and seek with the lover who has nothing to own expect Him. "Why dost Thou", says lover, "look askance from behind the veil ? What does it mean ? Dost Thou feel any shame in coming out of these curtains ?"[24] The poet suspects; perhaps He is ugly or else He is ashamed of showing Himself naked :

> "Are you ugly ? are you proud or shy ?
> Are you hurt by open appearance ?
> Why covers and curtains, why ?"

If these are not the cause of His secrecy and He is not proud or ugly, the lover entreats Him ' take off these coverings and put down these curtains", because he has lost all patience and, will have Him today, all naked in His true colours :

> "Pray strip Thee naked do,
> I pray Thee, do I pray,
> I'll have no Nay.
> To-day."

When the flame of intense and sincere love widens and deepens in consciousness, the distance and differentiation between the lover and Beloved disappears. The time of union approaches and the fire of eagerness for union also increases in intensity. "This is", Rama Says, "in accordance with the 'Law of Gravitation' in which the force of attraction is inversely proportionate to the square of the distance. It means that, as the distance is reduced, the intensity of love is increased. Its converse is also true. As the distance is increased, the intensity of love is reduced."[25] Nothing can taint or diminish the glory of the Beloved. It is an open secret, and :

> "No, neither vanity nor shame,
> Taints me, no kind of blame !
> Do you wish me to bare my Self,
> glorious, rare ?"

The lover has to cast away all desire for any kind of status, name and fame. He has to become candid, sincere, and take off these curtains of body, mind, possession, loves, hatreds, claims, clingings and designs. This results in purification or transparency of the heart, after which the poet finds himself laying with Him on the same bed. The four eyes meet, a gale of love passes, and the lover and the beloved are lost in union :

> "My Self in which I live,
> In thee I live and move,
> And to thee my self I give,
> O Love ! O Love ! O Love" !

When the coverings of 'I' and 'mine' are taken off, the lover finds His bedding and His coverings (clouds, rains, nights, etc.) :

> "Delightful ! delicious ! how lovely and sweet,
> His covers I find my covers and sheets,
> His blankets and quilts my blankets and quilts."

Union results after the total loss of distinction or duality. The lover communicates the experience of his adventure of everlasting romance. He says that during this ecstasy of union, the blankets and quilts fall down. He rises above the sectarian religious creeds and all trace of name and form is effaced. The lover says, "We are now one; there is none to disturb me. My absoluteness has neither form nor name. It is above time, space and causality. And :

> "Lo ! Off go the blankets !
> Off covers and quilts,
> He is I, I He,
> No He, She, Me or Thee."

Here, at the height of this experience, words and description are of no avail, as they cannot communicate that august sense of the first hand realization of the lover's rapture. Rama observes that words come back "as though like a rubber ball, rebounding after striking against a wall. Words and language fail to describe that stage. There, even the thinnest curtain of 'I' and 'Thou' does not exist."[26] Such is the mystery of love :

"O Love ! O Love ! O Love !
Above time, Space and causality.
Thee I always love,
O Truth, the one Reality,
O Love ! O Love ! O Love !"

According to the Indian conception, the highest culmination of love is a transcendence of love when it is transmuted into bliss. The Upanishads say, that when one has melted in utter unity, who loves whom ? Man's real Self is nothing but this transcendental love, and true purity is that where all beauty is absorbed in the real Me. Then one feels and enjoys his spiritual oneness with all to such an extent that to talk or think of meeting any object, sounds like a painful hint of separation. Ah ! what a joy it is. The ocean of nectar ripples and foams :

"O Joy, the fairy world, my bride,
Nay, talk no difference,
Myself the bridegroom and I the bride."

We have seen how, according to Rama, the purpose of life is happiness, and how this delight is not due to our wife, wealth, children, possessions and position. The life which seems at first weighed down with coarser animal pleasures and their pursuit seems to be the be all and end all of everything, only ends in disgust and confusion. However, in such pursuit, there comes a time beyond which we cannot proceed further and naturally we have to withdraw baffled. The grandeur of the external world becomes insufficient to express the inner grandeur, for we are instructed by the ancient sage, that the husband is not loved for the sake of the husband, but for the Self or God that is in him. In truth, everything is dear to us for the sake of the Self, which is the repository of all knowledge and virtue. The Self in man is not only love, knowledge and delight, but it is also the Master of all action. Without action we cannot actualise truth in life, and knowledge becomes but an abstract proposition and love and beauty are reduced to mere images or metaphors of imaginary romance. The one thing that this "lion" knows is true knowledge practically worked out in his life. This knowledge is in contrast to the many things that are full of complexity and ignorance, and are known by the "fox". "The lion is Nirvana", writes Jesse Roarke, "that is absolute Life; the fox is samsara, that is, life and death—the elusive and insubstantial checkered shadow-play of light—darkness : the light being treacherous, partial and small, never sure, never stable, never really illuminating".[27] What is required in the present state of crisis, is the knowledge of the "lion" that is workable in practical life. It also embodies the true vision of art as something given from a larger and brighter world.

This goal can only be achieved when our contemplative powers are properly balanced and harmonised. Thus comes the need of Karma Yoga, and its importance in putting our ideals on a practical basis. Strictly speaking, the word "karma" includes, not only our physical acts, but our thinking, imagining, wishing and desiring faculties too. True knowledge or true love is included in the term "karma". Knowledge, devoid of the practical power of karma, and love without action and knowledge, are inconceivable and impracticable. In order to press the wine of joy from our of life, man or animal must be doing, working, thinking, fighting, loving, helping and always doing something positive. This according to Rama is "the Dynamics of Mind". For him no thought or feeling could be considered as complete till it had somehow wrought itself out into action. "Work", he says, "is another name for realisation." True work is God-consciousness. Man is not a plant or an animal, and he cannot live any longer in a world of life and matter. He has to work and "hammer on" to pattern and organise the animal mould for higher purposes and with higher motives use the divine power that is latent in him.

Yoga, says the Gita, is skill in works; that is to say, it is the art of transformation of mind and being through action. It is an art of doing action with skill in order to shed off our imperfect mode of consciousness and rise to a higher mode of awareness that is not of the ordinary animal or intellectual man. Even a little of this yoga, if performed with the right attitude, delivers the soul out of the great peril and opens the gate of escape from the vicious circle of our ordinary human existence. We are not like, "figures on a dial", nor do we live merely to eat and exhaust our "breaths" in inhaling and exhaling the sweet and bitter joys and pleasures of life. According to the poet we must :

"......live in deeds, not days,
In thoughts, not breaths,
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
He lives most who thinks most
Feels the noblest, acts the best."

As compared to animals and plants, man has developed the intelligence and power of introspection and scrutiny. He has also consciousness and the element of egoism in him. Being more developed and evolved, he says, "I am the doer. I am the doer", and although, he is not the actor, he finds himself involved in the complexities of life and is perpetually being tossed up and down by the three modes of Nature. He does not realize that in the deep sleep state, he continues to be living with the usual circulation of blood, yet there is an absence of egoism, as if he is "the brother of the mineral and the vegetable kingdom". The concept of egoism, this idea of "mine" and "thine", develops only when one comes into the waking state. It is like the image of the sun that is being reflected in a stream as soon as it evolves out of the snow and runs a race with the other streams of the forest. This egoism disappears when one rises to the heights of God-realization. Just as it is the sun that makes rivers flow, similarly, according to Rama, "it is not your little self or egoism" that is working. "Whatever you are doing or whatever is being done is due to one Reality-God."[28] So, take precautions, do not bind yourself with the wheel of Karma and :

"Believe not when the people say,
Oh, what a fine game you play.
No, not in their praise,
Never can acts degrade or raise."

The outward actions of the yogi or an ordinary man may be same, but the difference lies in the state of being, in the will and temperament and in the consciousness behind the act. Action cannot bind, it is the desire and the wrong thinking that degrade and bind. Outward actions and conditions influence us in proportion to our thoughts about them, therefore, the poet instructs us by saying :

> "Thought is another name for fate;
> Choose then thy destiny and wait."

The fate that binds us is nothing but the result of our own past actions. The individual in his ignorance, disregards the universal and pretends to choose for himself. In this manner he binds himself in his own falsehood and ignorance. Action is defined as "the work which has connection with the mind". It is the mind which is the cause of ideas and desires in us. The desires impel us to do certain actions—good or bad—that produce certain results which go on to make our fate. "Therefore", Rama proclaims, "fate is the result of our own ideas, thoughts or desires." A man is free to act but, once he has committed himself, the fate-lines are formed in the journey of life's train according to the desire he entertained. "The very action", Rama points out, "for which he was free to act, becomes binding on him, after it has been done by him." God does not make one rich and another poor, one blind or crippled and the other healthy and strong. All is achieved through one's actions.

The powers are there—Karma and Prarabdha—that shape the destiny of man and which are binding on him. He is free to do his karma or make efforts, but in respect Prarabdha he is bound and has to follow the line of thought that he has already chalked out. Both Karma or Purushartha (actions) and Prarabdha (the result of previous actions) work together in human life. So in Vedanta, by "Destiny" we mean the result of our past actions which we cannot avoid and of which we must suffer the consequences. By Karma we mean the freedom to act or not to act. Man can make or mar his future destiny. There is this element of freedom and also an element of dependence in man. A "Railway bogie", Rama says, "is free to go any way but when the rails have been laid down, it is bound to run only on those rails. Similarly, a man is quite free before doing any deed. But once he has acted, he is bound to suffer the results of his actions good or bad."[29] There is no way out of it except to rise above good and bad and realise the power that is the motive force of our negative and positive acts.

There is also a stage at which a doer does work but is not bound by its results or fate. A man who understands the philosophy of karma, knows that the yogi differs from the ordinary man. A Karma Yogi rises to the consciousness of the one existence in all. He knows that the freedom to act in any way is due to the Atma, that is absolute freedom. Though our will is bound in the phenomena of cause and effect, yet the Self that is above our will is free. The whole universe—internal and external—is seen as happening within himself, not in his small ego or mind, but within this vast and infinite Self with which he is constantly identified. He finds all action arising in this Being, arising out of the divine Existence, as the streams of truth, knowledge, will and bliss. When he begins to participate consciously in Its working, and perceives all things in the light of the divine truth, then :

"The present, absent, near and far,
The past and future, flower star,
As Me and Mine, I enjoy;
O Joy ! O Joy ! O Joy !"

Even when his own actions move on certain lines that differ from others, he is not bound by them, because all his passions, preferences, gropings and seekings have ebbed down. He is free and sees :

"No rival, no foe !
No injury, no woe !
No nothing could harm me,

No, nothing alarm me.
The soul of all,
The nectar-fall,
The sweetest Self,
Yea ! health itself."

It is evident that such an increasing wideness of vision reveals an increasing knowledge and, we know that knowledge is power, and mastery and an increasing capacity for work. The yogi knows that desire and its brood are incompatible with skill in works and that their persistence is the sign of imperfect yoga. To use the terminology of the Vedic seers, by yoga is Varuna born in us. We enter into the vast sky of spiritual living where Mitra, Lord of Light and love, appears and takes all our activities of thought and feeling and links them to the Divine harmony. This Divine harmony is called Aryaman in its illumined power, and by the combination of all three comes the indwelling Bhaga, the pure bliss and all-seizing joy, that makes the yogi rise :

"Above this plain of unrest.
Accepting all things that come to me,
As roses dropt from Thy breast."

According to the poet, we should not feel the desire for anything, because our Self is actually the "fulfilment of all desires" and really we require nothing. We should do our work with the "grace of a universal Ruler", for pleasure, in peace of mind, for fun or mere amusement. The aim of life does not lie in "accumulating riches" and wasting energy, but in cultivating the inner potentialities, and freeing ourselves to "become God". Life is perpetual activity and what can lift us above the dread of fate is our :

"Pushing, marching, labour and no more stagnant indolence,
Enjoyment of work as against tedious drudgery,
Peace of mind and no disaggregation."

Work for Rama means harmonious vibration with the real Self and attunement with the universe. Anand is our Self, but it becomes "diluted with the pungence of innumerable desires and loses its original characteristics". When we cease to seek success, it seeks us; that is the law; but we, due to our selfishness, keep it away. Unselfish union with the reality is real action, and it is oftentimes labelled and branded as no work or idleness. "Having nothing to do, be always doing" sums up the Vedantic teaching. This is true happiness which is blissful. We should leave the bodily enjoyments to our destiny and work hard to achieve this height of Bliss. Intense work, according to Vedanta is rest. When the greatest worker is at the height of his work, his mind is absorbed to such a degree that the feeling, "I am working" is entirely gone. Thus incessant work leads us to the highest yoga. It is burning our body and muscles, like the wick and oil of a lamp; then only we can shed lustre around us, which is real Anand—"serene and peaceful, tranquil calm". This is achieved through right action as taught by Lord Krishna in the Gita :

> "Therefore, arise, thou, son of Truth ! brace
> Thine arm for conflict, nerve thy heart to meet—
> As things alike to these—pleasure or pain,
> Profit or ruin, victory or defeat.
> So minded, gird thee to fight, for so,
> Thou shalt not sin."

References

1. Vol. V, pp. 108-9.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
3. Vol. V, pp. 184-85.
4. Nolini Kanta Gupta, *Collected Works*, Vol. Seven, p. 42.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.
6. Vol. V. 92.
7. Vol. IV, p. 33.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
9. Sri Aurobindo, 'The Infinite Adventure', *Collected Poems* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram : Pondicherry, 1972), p. 137.

10. *Ibid.*
11. Vol. IV, p. 68.
12. Vol. IV, p. 59.
13. Vol. IV, p. 54.
14. Vol. V, p. 106.
15. Sri Aurobindo, 'Lila', *Collected Poems*, p. 142.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
17. Vol. IV, p. 89.
18. Dr. Radhakrishnan, *The Present Crisis of Faith*, p. 17.
19. Vol. IV, p. 76.
20. Vol. IV, pp. 110-11.
21. Vol. IV, p. 113.
22. Sri Aurobindo, 'The Divine Hearing', *Collected Poems*, p. 130.
23. Vol. IV, p. 69.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*
27. Jesse Roarke, Critical Foxfires, *The Advent*, A Quarterly, Vol. XXXVII, No. 3, August 1980, pp. 18-23.
28. Vol. IV, p. 158.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 262.

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Epilogue

It cannot be denied that the age in which we live is a period of bewilderment, uncertainty and fear. If there does not descend a general awakening of consciousness to create harmony and order in this chaos and appalling complexity, then our future shall remain bleak. The keynote of modern literature is the serious grappling of thoughts and ideologies with many currents and cross currents. This groping in the dark makes life feverish and fretful with a ghoulish vision and a nightmarish tendency. Man is fragmented and his frustration has made life empty. The sense of frustration of modern man has been caught by the sensitive poet, T.S. Eliot, who writes :

> "We are the hollow men,
> We are the stuffed men,
> Leaning together,
> Headpiece filled with straw, alas !
> …………
> In our drycellar,
> Shape without form, shade without colour,
> Paralysed force, gesture without motion."
>
> (The Hollow Men)

Before laying bare the mood and temper of the modern consciousness that has turned this "world" into an "arms bazar, with its complex, shifting relationship",[1] it would not be unreasonable to point out that Rama's immense spiritual consciousness—that embraces the higher and the lower, matter and mind, equally—is an antidote to the malady of the present century. Rama with his dynamic personality, his versatality, his light of wisdom and prophetic vision, can certainly kindle the fire of reasoning in us, to wash away this dirt of duality, the distinction between black and white, Hindu and Muslim, Christian and Jew. The purpose and value of Rama's life and work, lies in his being able to give a new purpose and direction to ancient ideals to suit the spirit of the present age. His work achieves the status of a classic, because it has the same power to stimulate the mind, soothe the heart, enrich one's whole nature and to make one new being altogether. The poet-seer Rama accelerates the progressive march of the Indian Renaissance and emits sparks of the Vedic fire that, like seeds, shall usher in the birth of the future divine race of humanity. He himself is the representative of that culture and an image of the New Man, who has personally overstepped all the limitations and incapacities inherent in man. He has found himself, and is not to be in awe of Nature. He has grounded himself in the secret harmony and union that makes him Superman; the type that Sir Aurobindo envisaged, who really comes like :

"......blazing light,
And the shadows must flee."

It is these poet-seers of Superamental realization who shall inhabit this earth. Only then, in the words of Sri Aurobindo :

"Nature shall live to manifest Secret God,
The Spirit shall take up the human play
This earthly life become the life divine."
(Savitri Book II, Canto I)

It is not the Nietzschean "will to power", which is at best; a supreme asuric power. The portrait of the New Man that we find in Rama is a cumulative growth of the Divine power. The strength it exerts and the victory it achieves, does not come from the ego, but from a higher personal Self, which is one with the Cosmic Soul and therefore with all personal souls. "Thus the New Man", writes Nolini Kanta Gupta, "shall affirm his individual sovereignty and do so to perfection by expressing through it his unity with the Cosmic powers, with the infinite godhead. And by being Swarat, Self-Master, he wlll become Samrat, world-master."[2] Rama wants us to know that the present man is not the highest level of creation. This must be superseded by a gradual attainment of philosophic consciousness, intensity of understanding, and a profound appreciation of the spiritual meaning of the whole.

In the present crisis of faith, the criss-cross roads of modern civilisation offer us the dwindling values of a divided inheritance, that make our lives the playthings of many diverse and mutually antagonistic forces. To Freud, man is a biological phenomenon, a prey to instinctual desires and their redirection in the face of "harsh" reality. He, is therefore, in the Darwinian tradition, simply a part of nature. To Marxists man is the outcome of economic and social forces, the product of an evolutionary necessity as rigid as any to be found in the natural world. A pessimistic scientific humanism sees man's aspirations and hopes as "the outcome of chance collocations of atoms" (Bertrand Russel). In spite of all these conflicting ideologies, human misery remains lamentably the same. We suffer from an "inward loneliness" and mental illness. Man has reduced himself in many cases to a mere reactor to change and seems to suffer from a "type of neurosis, from cultural disintegration".[3] The world is now gripped in a tremendous crisis. From men's lives have passed away all sense of restraint, politeness of heart and gracefulness. They have sunk into the depth of deformation, and depravity and extreme selfishess have become the order of the day. Falsehood, pretence, cleverness, deceit, harshness, cruelty, rudeness and crookedness are becoming a universally approved state of things and being accepted as human temperament and human nature. "Leave aside worldly men" writes Nolini Kanta Gupta, "And look at the youth on whom the burden of the world has not yet fallen and who speak of visions and ideals. What is their nature today? Their liberty means licence, absolutism; any sort of obedience or observance of rules is, in their eyes slavery; it takes away from their self-respect. We see at each step everywhere how rude and arrogant have become the students of these days."[4] It seems that some black force from behind has possessed human hearts and tempts them to turn towards whatever makes them beasts, fiends and demons. And this state of affairs is proudly accepted as an ideal, a modern materialistic "scientific" ideal.

When we observe this decisive degradation of the values of our materialistic civilisation, in which quantity smothers quality, and in which machines and money count for more than men and spiritual values, we are driven to exclaim, with the Duke of Albany in 'King Lear', " 'Tis the times, plague when mad man lead the blind." Our leaders who are indulging in the "politics of communal riots" are according to Kuldip Nayar "the real culprits" who "exploit communal or caste feelings for their purposes".[5] They who are driven by the pride of intellect—not illumined with light from the great heights—reflect only the earth-born flickering light of the intellect. They will reap the fate of Lucifer and descend to the pit of destruction :

"But man, proud man,
Drest in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As makes the angels weep."
(Shakespeare—Measure for Measure)

Attempts have been made to reckon artistic experience as an illusion; or make it the outcome of the causes which reasoning is able to discover. There are persons who talk of poetry like a mechanic talking about the operation of an engine. For them, if we follow a few tricks of the trade, we will get poetry. They see no more mystery in it than there is in engineering. In his book 'The Artist and Psychoanalysis (1924)', Roger Fry, has assessed that art is an unconscious and symbolic expression of the sensuous instinct. Some argue that historical factors can easily account for poetry as a reaction to environment. A statement of origins may help us to understand the pathology of art and its failures, but not, its normal creativity. Intellectual power, imaginative fancies and facts of sense may result in clever verses, but this is only a manufactured poetry and not the true poetry that has the maturity of experience to thrill us. In art, technique is no doubt important, but the thing of supreme importance is inspiration, without which technique is totally dead. Under the compulsion of "scientific" view of existence, those who would be "scientific", and make technique everything, do not know that this approach throws up a barrier to appreciation, and makes the creation of really great, profoundly powerful and significant art impossible. "True poetry", writes Dr. Radhakrishnan, has that "touch of the soul which escapes one who lives on the surface. We measure the value of poetry by the depths of its roots in reality. Only poems that come from the soul, trailing clouds of glory make the heart beat and the eye brighten"[6] to see how

> "In the floods of life, in the storms
> of deeds up and down I fly."

And in this "endless web" and " the whistling loom of time" :

> "I fly weaving the living robe of Deity."

The present day western "naturalistic" approach to things and its conception of spiritual values touch only the fringe of the Mystery. The intellectual approach, entirely in accordance with the methods of modern "science" is not adequate to venture the adventure of consciousness in the aesthetic realms. "It can touch only", writes Jesse Roarke, "the most external things, the matters of technique and nothing more without aid from the larger nature; it is quite incapable of understanding art."[7] Rama's art is an exemplar of the spontaneity which at the point of saturation, warbles songs that create form like a tree out of a seed or the waking state out of sleep. Inspiration is always paramount and primary, without which literature becomes trivial. The poet may symbolise erotic feelings in a wider expression, as for instance :

"When blushing bride by love doth stand,
Says "Yes" with eyes and gives her hand,
Adieu ! father, mother,
Adieu ! sister, brother,
The hair do stand at end,
The throat is choked, oh friend!"

Or he may transform certain images of his contemporary transitional environment into a rhythm of supreme felicity as :

"Ye magnetized to laziness,
....
Punctilious, touchy, hot and red,
Like swollen sore with gathered head,
Bewildered hordes, befounded millions,
All, at the mercy of opinions."

This does not indicate that the poet restricts poetry to rhythm, sex and environment. His is not the shrunken and feeble modern consciousness that is unwilling to deepen, heighten, strengthen and enlarge itself. Existentialism that has spread the mood of "anxiety" has resulted in the cultural crisis in the world. People are suffering from an inner emptiness, anxiety and split-consciousness. Rama asks us to recognize the five steps in the cosmic ladder of evolution which begins from the inorganic and ascends to the physical, to the biological or psychological or logical, then to the mental and intellectual. Our present stage of logical and conceptual mind, is not the final step of evolution. The logical mind that dwells in abstractions and builds cathedrals and temples is not the end of human evolution. According to Rama, it has to grow into the spiritual, and recognize that man is a subject, a spark of the spirit and not a mere object, a thing among things. "Modern literature," writes Dr. Radhakrishnan, "is essentially trivial. Even our greatest masters like Bernard Shaw and H.G. Wells do not touch the heights of genius. They have not given us one epic which brings out the full meaning of life, which leaves us throbbing with wild hopes and dazzled by new vistas, not a single drama of profoundly moving nature which devastates us by its grandeur, burns into us unforgetable visions of men at grips with fate, which shakes, exhausts, cleanses us."[8] Our "positivism" negates everything worthwhile, and keeps our life tossing on a surface-hugging sensation. De Sola Pinto wrote of "The bewilderment and despair of an age which has lost the traditional clues to the labyrinths of the inner life."[9] We believe that there is nothing more than the world of nature to which we have become fastened and in our great hurry and speed we have lost our inward resources. We reflect merely, like a set of mirrors opinions which we get from outside. There is an internal vacuum in the modern mind that is responsible for all mental and nervous troubles. This "civilisation" to Rama is a "vagrant dream" in which minds are being hypnotized to believe and behave in accordance with what they are not. We are in encircling gloom and "darkness" and do not know that :

"Improper property keeps you sad,
In clothes as coffins, homes as graves,
Ye bury Self, then wail and rave,
You spare the husks and soil the Soul.
To save a part ye lose the whole.
Possessed ye are by your possessions,
Oppressed by hitting and hard suggestions."

Most of modern art, according to the Mother's appreciation is a "mushroom art surface most, sapless, parasitical".[10] It does not tap the deep springs, and has no deep significance, meaning or purpose. It is peripheral to life, and not central, as art should be. The artist requires an other dimension of which he has to become aware. Then only he can make art a sadhna for his soul's release from ignorance, and grow in spiritual consciousness through mind and body. The intellect that is keen in analysis and patient in observation can never create a great work of art.

There are no agonies of the spirit; we only suffer from the torments of mind which we can overcome by following a way out of them. It is due to our spiritual poverty that we suffer in the midst of plenty, and live lives full of frustration and grief. The world has now reached a stage when new sets of values are springing up. Behind all these manifestations of confusion and uncertainty, there lies a deeper and more profound problem—the inability to arrive at a commonly accepted metaphysical picture of man, that will unveil his hidden glory, and make him realize that :

"The heavens and stars,
Worlds near and far,
Are hung and strung,
On the tunes I sung."

Or give us the experience :

"I am without form, without limit,
Beyond space, beyond time,
I am in everything, everything is in me."

Man is not a complicated object of nature, and a scientific or an objective account depersonalizes and fragments him into the biological, the social and the political man. However, in our account we forget that he is also an individual, who feels and aspires for the fifth ladder of cosmic evolution and longs to establish his spiritual majesty. He can say like Hamlet :

"……I have that within which passeth show,
These but the trappings and suits of woe."

According to Rama, if we recover our faith in the ultimate goodness, truth and decency of things; if we are able to live in the world with our consciousness centred in the ultimacy of the spirit, many problems that torment us will be got over. A man who has attained spiritual consciousness can ascend to the higher supramental realms and perceive Truth without the distorting medium of the mind. He has no need then to escape from the harsh realities of life. He shall, like the poet simply go about his "daily life" diffusing "virtue", "as the star diffuses light and the flower perfume, without being aware of it",[11] or if for instance, he was "left alone" on "the ethereal heights of Truth-life", he would not mind, but keep always his league with Truth, because he knows that he is never alone when alone, and that "the sun of righteousness" is always his "companion". His art becomes a channel of truth-force, truth-thought and truth-sensation. Further, he does not go out to spread it, but "the Truth spreads me and spreads itself".[12]

Rama assures us that this world "is not on the whole a hard world to live in". If we acquire the knack of making concessions, we will be able to hold our spiritual values in the pressure of what is called the "struggle for Existence". And, says Rama, "One who possesses the art of living is a Rishi, all the world must harmonize with him because he harmonizes with all the world."[13] By bringing in "altruism", Rama is for a "new spiritual, moral or intellectual birth". This birth is not based on "wordly wisdom" which is only an excuse of what is "ignorance". It pays greatest homage to the Truth, and shall not propagate idolatry by showing respect for persons, appearances, title , riches and learning. The "knack of making concessions" does not imply conformity to the opinions of people. Moreover, it does not mean the "fever" of doing what constitutes the service of humanity. In the words of Rama, "Truthful individualism is the only true altruism. He who simply keeps himself well attuned to cheerfulness and love and gives out plainly the Truth as revealed to him without distorting it in the name of concession or conformity, such alone will survive in the long run."[14] It is our anxiety for facts and figures that works all sort of mischief. This, not only invites ausuric and animal forces to divert us from the main track, but leaves us in the sea of uncertainty and gloom to be driven by the fickle and whimsical moods of the ego. In our vain pursuit of phenomenal knowledge, we miss the taste of delight that is the essence of our Self. and are thus unable to gather in lifes' experience the thousand forms of beauty that Nature embody for us. We forget what the poet means when he sings :

> "With joy the stars perform their shining,
> And the sea its long Moon slivered roll,
> For self-poised they live, nor pine with nothing,
> In what state God's other works may be,
> In their own tasks all their power pouring,
> These attain the mighty life you see.
> "Resolve to be thyself; and know that he
> Who finds himself loses his misery."

The problem with the modern generation is that they do not recognize this truth. They do not bother about the Infinite that Rama so persistently asks us to experience as the sine qua non of life's activity. Neither do they feel the need of it nor admit it for the beauty and sublimity of poetry. Modern cosmopolitanism cannot kindle in us the universal feeling, the sense of transcending the limitations of time and clime that comes with the realization of Rama-consciousness. The moderns are living still within the three boundaries and have not cut away the knots of the Body, the vital and the Mind, which is the prime requisite for Rama-consciousness. With the help of physical sight and sense perception, they make a web of visible and palpable pictures of the external absolute, and distort art with their stark "realism", by turning it into a photograph of nature. Rama tells us that we cannot find universal in the external, or in the body which is field of obscurity, strife, division and difference. The artist who is engrossed in the exterior is compelled to remain confined to a particular and limited time and space. If the law-codes, rigidity of customs and "Karma-kand" are made "the tyrant's staff", and the latter dominates the spirit then, they become after a while a "choking prison", impeding all growth and vitality of the nation. The place of union with the universe is not in vitalism, materialism or in idealism. To arrive at a true universal literature, creation is to be extended beyond and liberated from vital being or emotion self. Poetry otherwise, will remain only the stuff of personal idiosycrasy or the fancy of a particular individual who lives in the imaginative circle of his own temporary experience, and cannot radiate the joy of the real Self. Rama by presenting his ideal of Self, seeks to remove all this mist and the narrow horizons of the heart and emotions, by giving us a poise in a wider and freer world and by showing us a way to override the boundaries of an ignorant ego and a bounded personality. Rama has demonstrated the fact that art attains its full strength when it rises above all that is environmental, common, ordinary and parochial, because the function of art is to scan the details of a greater life, and not to reflect or to imitate life in its subjective expressions.

In ancient times during the Roman ascendancy, there was a great rhetorician, Longinus by name. He believed that the greatness of any work of art consisted in how far it was able to give vent to the lofty thought of the inner Self. The more cultivated and developed the soul of the poet, the more sublime will be his poetic genius. Such genius is like the continuous light that truly serves and blesses. An immature soul can scarcely soar very high; his "fire-works illumination" may attract crowds, but directly after the show is over, no trace is left behind. A modern critic, F.L. Lucas in "The Decline and Fall of the Romantic Ideal", appreciates the view of Longinus, and remarks with regret that the present-day artistic creations are mostly insignificant and futile. It is because, the modern world has a dearth of highly developed souls. The moderns may argue that it is not necessary or obligatory to have a great soul in order to be a great artist, although "in the hoary past", Nolini Kanta Gupta says, "it was almost so. Valmiki, Vyasa and Homer rightly deserve to fall into that category. But the ancient Latin Catullus, the French poet Villon of the medieval age, most of the 'Satanic' poets of the Romantic age, and Oscar Wilde and Rimbaud of the present age—none of them are great souls or possess anything remarkable in their nature."[15] They may contain some aesthetic elements, a glitter and polish of style, and carry behind them a tail of trailing show, but practically these outer virtues have no weight at all. But how can we look in that way upon the inner Self that is deeper and higher than morality and mere aesthetic satisfaction ?

The source of inspiration in present times, is the brain or the nerves or a fanciful mingling of the two. In our vital hunger, intellectual curiosity and nervous excitement, we neglect the inner soul that is the source of creation, and which stands as a judge on Nature. It is the "inner spiritual vision", the inner light which is for the artist a repository of all knowledge in the world. Rama calls it "Divya Drishti", an illumined feeling, a higher vibration with the All so much so, that the book of Nature remains no longer sealed, and everything becomes clear and luminous like the waters in a moonlit night or the brightness of of a noon day stream. "We do not give the Self", says Rama, "God, Love, a chance to do for us, we must care for the body, we must care for this mind, and it is plain to be seen that in that case only common-place notes come forth of us. Let the Master play upon the organ and the minute Love's hands touch the chords, music will pour forth—music that you never dreamt of before—wonderful light and harmony will begin to follow, divine melodies will begin to burst out, celestial rhapsodies will emanate."[16] The poet cannot throw his centre of gravity outside himself. He is not like the "restless jumping Jack" who arrives at conclusions easily, who needs not to be slow informing his convictions and marching onwards :

"As journey the Earth, her eye on the sun
 through the heavenly spaces,
And radiant in azure, or sunless,
 swallowed in tempests,
Falters not, alters not, journeying equal,
 sunlit or storm-girt.
So, Thou, son of earth, who has force,
 goal and time, go still onwards."

Here, it is not "Art for Art's sake" that the poet aims at and considers it to be the function of creation. The cant of "Art for Art's sake", which is the present-day principle in the field of artistic creation, does not carry much weight to Rama who is indifferent to any extrinsic aim or ideal. Rama can agree with the moderns who believe that art is the creation of the artist who creates himself; but his experience and conception of Self is different from them. Rama is one with the ancients who used "Self" to mean by it either the psychic Being which is the delegate of the Supreme Self, or the Supreme Self Itself—"That thou art". In the modern times, the "Self" signifies something exoteric, a surface consciousness acting through brain and nerves. Moreover, our psychology is a psychology without psyche. It is either behaviourism or the science of observing the flowing states of consciousness. It does not admit the existence of psyche, the soul. In the words of Schopenhauer, "The study of psychology is vain, for there is no psyche. It may be called the physiological-psychology or sometology."[17] Rama, like Longinus is prepared to pardon countless mistakes in an artist, if in his creation the innate nature of the inner Being is reflected. It is the fragrance and light of the inner Being that lifts our hearts and makes the work look beautiful, great and precious. This power cannot be learnt or acquired like a technical skill, it "cometh from afar" and widens our inner consciousness. This widening and deepening of consciousness adds to the poetic stature and lifts the creation to the level of excellence. The essence of poetic creation is the expression in the poet's vigilant and active inner consciousness, that is not vitiated by gross touches. Rama says, "Whatever is truly great, springs up from the inarticulate depths within."[18] It is when deep calls to deep that the artist is able to impregnate what he sees with the intensity of his own experience.

Such spiritual experience in poetic terms is an outflow of spontaneous illumined feelings that result in tranquillity when the mental cosmos of the poet reaches the point of saturation. These experiences are much more convincing and authentic than the results established by logic. Rama believes that it is the feeling that prompts, acts and stirs energy for the enactment of the cosmic drama. He quotes H. Spencer's last work—that he calls "dying swan-song"—in order show to how feelings control and dominate our life. Spencer, referring to an experiment of Huxley with the large-brained porpoise says, "The body of our thought-consciousness consists of feeling, and only the form constitutes what we distinguish as intelligence.

That part which we ordinarily ignore, when speaking of mind, is its essential part, viz, feelings. The feelings are the master, the intellect is the servant." The master (heart) if improved and made transparent can direct and channelise the powers of the servant (head) in bringing up the race of humanity. This will firmly establish us in the centre of consciousness and help us to live with a altered consciousness higher than the loquacious level and, thus we can sound the depths of our being and bring transformation in the relationship of individual and society. In the words of Rama "It is to realize, feel and be the innate reality in you which is also the innate Reality in Nature, to be living personification of Tat-tvam-asi :

This, this is life; this Immortality !
    This is to live and move as power, Shakti,
That splits pillars with glance."

Rama's poetry of spiritual vision contains a message of universal quality. He, like Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo, Vivekananda, Tolstoy, Tagore, Romain Rolland and others, belongs to the race of prophets whose words may not be accepted in their generation, but will be accepted by those that follow. In these days of doubt and uncertainty, when young men and women all over the world are losing their faith and are turning to new-fangled ideas, they must remember that Rama is the greatest revolutionary we have had in recent times. The great nuclear powers facing each other are ready to bring about a holocaust, but perhaps, due to their instinctive attachment to survival they are horrified at the vision of mass suicide. This instinct may bring stalemate and avoid nuclear catastrophe; but it cannot be a permanent solution, as such a stalemate, based on terror and fear, cannot go on indefinitely. The prophets of light have engaged the attention of thinkers and writers all over the world. They suggest that we should recast with a new look, the consciousness of people and even the great powers of the world are now thinking of adopting some other methods than that of the mere balance of terror. Rama's practical philosophy and his message are of supreme relevance to us at the present moment. It is necessary for us to remember what Rama stands for, individually, nationally and internationally and;

whether in our own life or outside, we have to work for the principles which is stood and exemplified through life.

Rama is a living light of the Indian philosophy and religion that he repeatedly called Vedanta—the end of all knowledge. He considered it to be the backbone of India which as long as it remained flexible, pliant and plastic, gave the nation vitality, mental power and spiritual strength to work for all round perfection and the expression of the joy of activity in immortal words of infinite beauty. But alas ! the "Indians", Rama says, "are now no more religious heroes. They have no appreciation left in them for righteousness. They cannot stake their all, their life now at the altar of Truth."[19] In spite of the fact that Indian philosophy and spirituality have powerfully affected the minds of men all over the world, the modern Indians "would not mind now, even if they committed great sins or heinous crimes for their selfishness".[20] In England such writers as T.S. Eliot, Charles Morgan, Somerset Maugham, Graham Greene, Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood have increasingly turned towards the spiritualism for guidance and sustenance. Aldous Huxley was disillusioned in the post-war period; his refuge in Indian philosophy gave a new perspective to his vision of life and Nature. The influence of the Gita is evident in his later works like "Ends and Means", and "Brave New World Revisited" in which Huxley has elaborated mystical experiences which can give everlasting and soothing effects to the disillusioned west. He has adopted the principle of non-attachment or renunciation as a great power to liberate man from his bodily sensations and lusts, his craving for power and possessions and his anger and hatred.

The present day Indians are ignorant of the teachings of their religious scriptures. They do not ponder over them nor practice them in their daily lives. It is pity that they do not even appreciate that their forefathers have preserved a huge treasure which great men of the west like Frederic Schelegal, Sir Monier Williams, Huxley, Victor Cousin, Max Muller and others appreciate and accept with pride. In spite of this we are "starving in ignorance", unable to utilize this best of treasures in the world. Among the many oriental scholars in the west men like Prof. Max Muller and Paul Deussen, as well as other persons of advanced thought, have already come to the knowledge that from ancient times India has produced a nation of philosophers. It has been well said by Victor Cousin, the great French Philosopher, whose knowledge of the history of European philosophy was unrivalled, that "India contains the whole history of philosophy in a nutshell". Again he said : "When we read with attention the poetical and philosophical monuments of the East, above all, those of India which are beginning to spread in Europe, we discover there many a truth and truths so profound, and which make such contrast with the meanness of the results at which the European genius has sometimes stopped, that we are constrained to bend the knee before the philosophy of the East, and to see in this cradle of the human race the native land of the highest philosophy."[21] Rama exhorts and implores us not to overlook our own "treasure" and be "enamoured of the imitation Jewellery and tinsel of others".[22] He assures us that "None can compete with you," while the "implementation or neglect of Bramha Vidya alone is responsible for our development or doom".[23] This Ancient Hind, once glorious Hind having been once the foremost leaders of the world in the field of learning and culture, is now ruthlessly stricken with poverty, incapacity, weakness, and stands on the verge of destruction. Seeing this crestfallen condition of India, Rama uttered this powerful prayer full of patriotic feelings. Such sincere and disinterested demands of the devotee are usually granted by the God :

"God bless our ancient Hind,
Ancient Hind, once glorious Hind.
From Sagar Island to the Sind,
From Kashmir to cape Comorin.
May perfect peace e'er rain therein."

Rama with his power of wisdom and spiritual light worked for a renovation and struggled hard to divest sublime values from the injunctions of fixed laws so as to follow the living current of life that has a rhythm of its own. He called modern civilization a laziness of the mind, responsible for all sorts of head-aches, heart-aches and nervous tensions. He tells us that it is not the wealthy, the prosperous and the more happily placed in life who find it more easy to turn to the higher life or the pursuit of the spiritual ideal. Neither the "cold" nor "hot climate" "stand in the way of our progress". He further adds : "We are lagging behind because we no longer practise true Vedanta, Bramha Vidya or truthfulness".[24] This is the reason why the Goddess of prosperity had fled from us, and carried such jewels as truth, discipline, fearlessness, courage, wisdom, knowledge, tolerance and forgiveness, etc., (known otherwise as Vedanta or Bramha Vidya) to America, Japan and other developed countries. In India, at present the many cults and sects, not only tarnish the image of her ancient spirituality, but also cast into the shade the values of intrinsic humanity. "In America" also Rama says, "there are as many, if not more, sects and cults as in India; but except in the case of a few shallow fanatics—chiefly those whose living depends on their creed—the thought of catholicism, Methodism, Presbyterianism, etc., never replaces or subordinates the feeling of fellow-countrymanship."[25] In India Muslims have been living together on the same soil for centuries and Hindus have helped with great reverance to raise their places of worship, and welcomed their culture as a part of the secular-organism. But Rama observes, that "their sympathy is bound more to the Turks in southern Europe than to their next-door neighbour in Hindustan. A child turned christian, although the very flesh and blood of a Hindu father, becomes more stranger than a street dog. What will not an orthodox dualistic Vaishnava in Mathura do to advance the interests of a fellow Vaishnava in the Deccan and to bring disgrace to an Advaita Vedantin in his own town?"[26] Such a state of affairs is very radical and unprecedented. He saw Indians intellectually, morally and spiritually wreck. They are divided socially, religiously and politically. With their uncollected minds and dissipated bodies they have erected the walls of prejudice, hate and fear. With their shallow knowledge they quarrel over triffles and live like enemies. The idea of a common nationality has become a meaningless whim. The nation has run short of vitality, life-energy has fallen to a low ebb, and weakness, disease and death are gradually forcing their way.

The question remains : what fault or defiance of the law of karma have deprived India of her vitality to such an enormous extent ? According to Rama, "It was the poverty of practical wisdom which brought the downfall of India." The blind identification with dead forms, and the making of worn-out past rules the mentors of our society, has deprived India of her life-energy, her natural zest and zeal and made her more like a machine. Another root cause of India's fall was the wrong interpretation and practice of institution of Sannyasa, and the "fantastic superstition preached in the holy name of religion". Sannyasa, the ascetic renunciation and the principle of escape from the world, has only dried up the sap of the nation's life. Though the world is not the ultimate reality, Rama has not denied its pragmatic value, and does not call it non-existent. His ideal is to turn individual salvation into the collective aspiration for perfection. "To work out your own salvation", Rama says, "and let society alone. Oh ! if only it were possible ! A drowning society cannot let you alone. You must sink with her if she sinks, and rise with her if she rises."[27] As long as there is an imperfect society burdened with lacs of sadhus, that are the outcome of "past dark ages of Indian history", like the "unhealthy scum"[28] on the lake of life—so long hardly any individual can hope to achieve perfection and enter into Nirvana. The institution of sannyasa stands at the top and represents the cumulative consummation of social life. One can only reach it by passing through the various stages of life till spontaneously the spirit of renunciation dawns, and he accepts the life of total withdrawal for spiritual attainment. That is why, Rama recommends the dignity of pushing, marching labour and the religion of unselfish activity in life. He asks us to live practical Vedanta, which means "Renunciation in action through love." He empathically lays it down that action is necessary even after the attainment of spiritual perfection. The proper spiritual attitude guides the house-holder to make the "right use of family relation". If his relation with his wife and others is not based on skin-consciousness; a householder can realize his real Self easily, and (without leaving his family and society) "elevate himself, and realise God within him".[29] The genuine spirituality of India as enshrined in the

Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita does not approve of the renunciation of life and action. "Doing verily works in this world one should wish to live hundred years; action cleaves not to a man" is the injunction of the "Isha Upanishad".

Another cause of India's decline was the caste-system. Earlier it was evolved for the national advancement and expressed itself beautifully as an organised division of labour and a union of spirit and heart. When, however, it started splitting India into innumerable divisions, the power of unity yielded to the infirmity of division. In the present-day society people are making desperate efforts to soldify and strengthen these walls of division, and confine social intercourse to a group of a few families or communal organisations. Rama says, "The abnormal development of skin-consciousness (caste prejudices), buried the real self (Atman, God) under the heap of transitory names, forms and limitations. The Shruti (Vedic wisdom concerning the Eternal self) was practically made a dead letter, and Smriti (Law codes dealing with ancient customs and affairs) was made the tyrant's staff".[30] Consequently, the nation's virility and life-energy failed to retain the original power to stretch her arms to an ever widening thought and action.

Foreign domination which began with Plassey in 1757 ended exactly 190 years later. The 15th of August 1947, marked the end of one epoch of political slavery and the beginning of another. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, it was an "important date in a new age opening for the whole world, for the political, social, cultural and spiritual future of humanity".[31] The shock of conquest and the shame of subjection under foreign rule were a challenge to India. They did not extinguish her inner fire, but led her rather to blaze forth in an outburst of activity and thought initiating a realistic process of national rejuvenation. The attainment of political freedom that reached its culmination on 15th of August 1947, released the energies that, since then, issued forth in a more intensified process of creative self expression. Swami Rama Tirtha, like Swami Vivekananda, personally led India into the current of world cultural forces. Both believed, like Sri Aurobindo, that India has in herself the requisite capacity, the historically acquired ability to function as the moral leader of nations. Rama, with his blazing spiritual light waded through the mud and mire of the ignorance, poverty and inertia of a fallen society, and laid bare the problems of the modern India. Rama found solution to the problems and imparted to his countrymen his passion and his resolve. The ideal : "To place people above wavering oscillation, to make them realize their natural dignity, unity and fellowship with all they see, to secure abiding natural integration by procuring natural, helpful differentiation is the object of Dynamic Vedanta as understood by Rama."[32] He believed in the unity of the Indian people, and in the descent of the soul-power that will fuse India into a single nation. Political and even economic democracy cannot in fact go long without the guidance and inspiration that religion alone can impart. The secrets of elevating democracy to a moral and spiritual level are to be found in the mystic facts embodied in the Upanishads. In them, according to Swami Vivekananda is the mine of strength to invigorate the whole world.

Swami Rama Tirtha is the representative or expression on earth of this soul-power which stands behind India as the One Being or (Purusam ekam). That is the person who alone can bring about harmony, unity and oneness in the diverse and variegated life of India. Keeping in consideration this diversity and variety, Rama attempted a higher and greater synthesis, and worked it out in a distinct manner and on a larger scale. He saw the unity of India based upon her ancient discovery of the inner-Being and the unity of the soul, that is vaster and more complete unity than any of the nations of Europe. Rama, the poet-seer discovered this self-conscious individuality as the lost soul of India and in his mystic trance saw his own self identical with India's self. He gave expression to this grand body in the following words :

> "The Commorin is my feet, the Himalaya my head. From my hair flows the Ganga; from head come the Brahmaputra and the Sindhu. The Vindhyachal are girt round my loins. The Coromandal is my right and the Malabar my left leg, I am the whole of India, and its east and west are my arms, and I spread them in a straight line to embrace humanity. I

am universal in my love. Ah! such is the posture of my body. It is standing and gazing at infinite space; but my inner spirit is the soul of all."[33]

Such is Rama's prophecied vision of

"Merry wedlock, union,
On earth or heaven,
Is a dim forshadowing symbol
Of my perfect embrace
Of the whole human race,
And my clasp so firm and nimble."

Rama saw our culture a rich mosaic; containing Hindu, Muslim and other elements. He exhorted people to discard narrow loves and hates and grow into wholeness. Hindus and Muslims can learn from each other; they have not merely to become better Hindus and better Muslims, but what is more important, better men. He exhorts us to be in touch with the spiritual personality of India and "see and worship India in the form of Shaiva, Vaishnava, Buddhist, Christian, Mohammadan, Parsi, Sikh, Sannyasi, Pariah or any of her children. I adore Thee in all Thy manifestations, Mother India, my Gangaji, my Kali, my Isht Deva, my Shaligram."[34] So:

"Let all her sons in love unite,
And make them do their duty aright.
Fill them with knowledge ever true,
And let their virtue shine anew.
....
National spirit in her do pour,
Extend her fame from shore to shore."

The task that awaits the Indian Muslims of tomorrow is the practice and preaching of a tolerant Islam, so that Islamic democracy may grow into human democracy. Without the help of practical Islam, the principles of Vedanta are entirely value-less to the vast mass of mankind. Referring to the interaction of Hinduism and Islam, Swami Vivekananda wrote a letter (10th June, 1898) to a Muslim friend, Mohammed Sarfraz Hussain. Jawahar Lal Nehru in 'The Discovery of India', (p. 403 footnote) calls it, "a remarkable letter". Vivekananda wrote : "For our own Motherland, a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam—Vedanta brain and Islam body—is the only hope. I see in my mind's eye the future perfect India rising out of this chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedanta brain and Islam body". Rama taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is oneness—or Advaitism. He attempted to harmonise the Vedas, the Bible, and the Koran, to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran, so that each may choose the path that suits him best. When the Indian Muslims learn to impart their own genius to this great religion and produce a crop of saints and sages who can command the veneration of all men, and refuse to accept the physical 'partition' as anything like a final thing. Then the dream of an integral India that looms behind the States of Pakistan and Bangla Desh shall possibly be materialised. Then will this old communal division into Hindu and Muslim, that has hardened into a permanent political division of this country be bridged and more and more eyes will turn not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice. But first of all, writes Sri Aurobindo, "By whatever means, the division must go. For without it destiny of India might be seriously impaired and even frustrated. But that must not be."[35] An India, spiritually united, economically strong, socially stable, and imbued with spiritual passion will be a unique force in the world affairs.

This country has yet to evolve a national system of education that is "man-making" and "character building", and which aims at allround perfection. Rama wants to purge our minds of the taints of occidentalism and unsuitable alien methods which give rise to various sectarian organisations, and unscientific dogmas and ideas. Rama is for the Institution of Life in which scientific knowledge is to be pursued in a most religious spirit. "Science", says Rama, "art, and other works (apparently secular) are to be pursued here to learn the application of

Vedantic spirit to business or for the acquisition of practical (or applied) Vedanta."[36] From the Vedantic point of view, the laboratory of a scientist is no less sacred than a Church, and a physical fact no less sacred than a moral principle. During Rama's class lectures on Vedanta, in the Academy of Sciences, U.S.A a man came with this question. "What is your attitude towards the Vedas ? What do you think of them ?" Rama replied, "We approach the Vedas in the same way that we approach chemistry." "Do you believe in the Vedas ?" Rama said, "I know the Vedas, I recommend them to you." Rama tells us that we should not regard the Vedas in the same way as we do the Bible. Our approach to the Bible is that of blind faith and the acceptance of everything on authority; while our approach to the Vedas should be as we approach a work on Astronomy or Chemistry. "Do not believe", Rama says, "in everything implicitly with blind faith, as some Hindus do." When we take up a book on science, we do not believe in the results because they are laid down by Newton or by Huxley, but make experiments ourselves, and after verifying the facts accept them and appropriate in our lives. According to Rama, "The teaching in the Vedas is not afraid of any criticism, of any questions or doubts. Let all your Western science examine them; let your Western light, (light always comes from the East, you remember, but suppose this is western light) come with its startling rays, and let a flood of this light bathe the fairy-face of the Shruti; there is not a single dark spot, there is not single black mole to be found on the fairy face of the Shruti. The Vedas are not in conflict with science; your present day discoveries and inventions are simply washing the feet of the queen of Shruti. They are serving the cause of Vedanta more and more."[37] The ancient sages understood the process of Cosmic evolution and its purpose so clearly that even Professor Huxley could not help admitting this when he said, "To say nothing of the Hindu sages, to whom evolution was a familiar notion long before Paul of Tarsus was born". Referring to this point Sir Monier Williams in his work, 'Hinduism and Brahminism' says, "Indeed, if I may be allowed the anachronism, the Hindus were spinozites more than two thousand years before the existence of Spinoza; and Darwinians many centuries before Darwin; and evolutionists many centuries before the doctrine of evolution had been accepted by the scientists of our time, and before any word like 'evolution' existed in any language of the world." India's misfortune was that she could not keep up this ideal and elevate it to the level of perfection that the ancients presaged as the goal of evolution. Just as a fish cannot live without water, so too, the Indians were bound to their religion, and it was their ultimate aim and objective. They were even looked upon as "religious cowards", because they were afraid of doing any act which was against Dharma or righteousness.

There are some critics who believe that too much religion ruined India, that the Indian mind wedded to religious sentiment, made religion their whole life and, thus, failed in the onward march of material and scientific progress. This may not be the case, because the observation of Rama, Vivekananda, Gandhi, Tagore and Dr. Radhakrishnan show that when India ignored her native principle of Dharma there came the gradual fall that brought into her social organism an unwanted asuric forces to darken the pure landscape of her wisdom. The advent of an Avtar, is an imperative step in the history of evolution. It is the descent of the Absolute which comes into force when people fall from the path of dharma and dark forces obstruct the evolution of the Divine plan. Sri Aurobindo contends, that "our fall does not matter and that the dust in which India lies is sacred". He further adds : "If the majority of Indians had indeed made the whole of their lives religious in the true sense of the word, we should not be where we are now; it was because their public life became most irreligious, egoistic, self-seeking, materialistic that they fell."[38] Our religion, now-a-days exists only in theory, and our practice of it is in our indulgence in useless discussions which lead us nowhere. Rama with a deep sigh of grief exclaims : "What a change, what a degradation".

If we interpret spirituality—without confusing it with a moral code or religious creed—as an attempt to realise and live in the highest Self, in the all embracing unity, and to raise life in all its aspects to the divinest possible values, then, "it is evident that there was not too much of religion, but rather too little of it".[39] Indians are now no more religious heroes. Their spiritual impulse has dwindled in its generality, they have no love and appreciation for the righteousness of the Dharma.

Our fall does not matter, provided we attain the maturity of mind, to press out of our centuries of suffering the wine of happiness and wisdom. We must understand that a "strong and pure life is the liver of History", we have to overcome the "old inertia", mould and adopt the past to the present and bravely launch our "present" in the race of the future. In our enthusiasm we do not touch the roots of the problem but only try to cure the symptoms. We do not see that even in the most innocent looking social, economic or political operation there is at its bottom for reaching attitudes and life urges—even a spiritual outlook. In order to make our reform permanent and wholly successful, we must first seek out and tackle the undercurrents of this spiritual outlook. The real remedy is not to ignore or degrade the age-long ideals of India, but to recapture their old amplitude, and give it a still wider scope; so that science may become a knowledge of the world, which reveals the Spirit of the universe and its ways therein. On this spiritual culture is based the conception of Indian Art and the inspiration and directness of vision that Rama has exemplified in his poems. In such a conception of Art, the sense of beauty, the ideas of intelligence become a revelation of the greater potentialities concealed in man and Nature, and of the deepest spiritual, universal magnificence. Sri Aurobindo urges that the "dexterity of the Indian hand and the intuitive gaze of the Indian eye must be recovered and the whole nation lifted again to the high level of the ancient culture--and higher."[40] Sri Aurobindo like Rama emphatically claimed : "India has the key to the knowledge and conscious application of the ideal."[41] It is in this ancient knowledge that India has to find the clue to the solutions of her problems. The world calls and expects much from her. She can best serve humanity by being herself and following the law of her own nature. She has the opportunity to rise to her height in the renaissance which is coming upon her. In this rests her destiny. The dark obscure desires, inordinate vital passions and dwarfing egoistic impulses that give unwanted birth to hundreds of communal riots and bring a bad name to her are black spots to be removed from India's face.

In spite of all this lurid dance of Satanic forces, the poet-seers have assured us that India shall rise and attain its prestine glory that shall even eclipse all her past achievements. "Everything in this world moves rhythmically", Rama says, "and the law of periodicity governs the phenomena. In accord with this law should move even the sun or star of prosperity"[42] of individuals and nations. When India was at the peak of her prosperity, nobody knew America and now that India is sunk in dungeon of poverty and pain, there is day in America. However, the onward course of the sun of prosperity will cross the Pacific, shining for a while on Japan and come back to India. The wise men may doubt and discuss, talk or sleep, the God shall grow amidst the disastrous situations of the present time and materialise the age-old dream of India. Rama has not gone anywhere. Where can he go ? He is here, there and everywhere pushing and marching through the forms of millions and millions of people of India and elsewhere, working through them as a soul-force to divinise humanity and the earth. According to the law of Nature, the sun of wealth and wisdom must complete its revolution, and Rama who is aspiring through all these bodies and forms must again see this sun of prosperity "shine once more in India with redoubled splendour". Such is his vehement prayer :

"O Krishna of mighty deeds untold,

O Rama ever so brave and bold.

Forsake them not in evil days,

Unworthy though in many ways,
God bless our helpless Hind."

We may not immediately become aware that "the age is upon us", Nolini Kanta Gupta says, "when the god-like soul anointed with its immortal royalties is ready to emerge and claim our salutation;"[43] but then, in the words of Sri Aurobindo the earth shall change and :

"……magic order come,
Overtopping this mechanical universe,
A mightier race shall inhabit the mortal's world."
(Savitri)

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